

the other. Mr. King insists strongly upon the existence of "proofs of Rolph's treachery to Mackenzie." When he reads in the second volume the admission that Rolph formed a plot for arresting Mackenzie, in case the rebellion succeeded, as a preliminary step to his own assumption of the Presidency of the Provincial Government, perhaps he will give Mr. Dent credit for putting the world in possession of some of those "damning proofs." This is, take it all in all, one of the most effective pamphlets which Canada has produced for many years. It was written under strong provocation, of which it bears the marks; for Mr. King distinctly puts himself in a fighting attitude, though he evidently keeps a reserve of ammunition.

THORPE MABLE.

LONGFELLOW.*

THERE is little room to cavil over the Longfellow Biography from a mechanical point of view. Internally and externally, in so far as the art of printer and publisher could bring it about, the work is a distinguished success. The type is large and excellent, the margins broad and inviting. We have been given the thick, rough-edged, creamy leaves, which it has been our pleasure to demand of late, and the deep-red cloth binding of the big, responsible-looking volumes is in the best possible taste. Clearly, with Messrs. Ticknor and Co., we have no fault to find. Nor is it easy to say, with the calmness of conscious justice, that Mr. Samuel Longfellow is in any respect blameworthy as to the matter of his production. In many respects he is distinctly above criticism. He has subordinated the author to the editor to an extent as unusual as gratifying. We get as little, indeed, of the author's individuality as if the book had been generated by steam or electricity. Immensely painstaking also is the labour which has presented us, not only with the broad facts, issues, and incidents of the poet's life, but with the minutest detail that in any way affected him, from the cradle to the grave. An eminent sense of propriety governs the compilation of the volumes; not a name is given, not an incident related which the author of "Evangeline" could not have read with equanimity in the *Boston Post* any morning at the breakfast table. So careful indeed is Mr. Longfellow of contemporaneous sensibilities that in more than one case the name of a lady incidentally mentioned by the poet as being beautiful is indicated by a dash, and whole letters, of no especially noteworthy character, are given to the public anonymously. The narrative is always clear and pertinent, the style easy and flowing, with here and there descriptive passages that are almost graphic. These passages usually refer to the circumstances and scenes that surrounded him, and not to the subject of the biography himself. If Mr. Samuel Longfellow's writing appears to evince at times almost an oppressively solemn consciousness of the importance of its theme, the world will find the fault easy to forgive in view of the tender relation the labourer bore to his task, perhaps also in view of the substantial benefit of faithful execution which such a consciousness brings.

About one-fifteenth of the nine hundred pages that form the volumes is occupied by Mr. Samuel Longfellow in direct communication, the very large fraction remaining being given over to the poet's journal, and to letters written and received by him. Among the latter are many that will be read with avidity, many that bear the unmistakable stamp of the genius of their authors—of their idiosyncrasies at least; letters from Nathaniel Hawthorne, Sumner, Bayard Taylor, Dickens, Thackeray, Emerson, Whittier, and scores of others. Here, however, as in many other places, was room for a discrimination which has not been used. Some of these epistles express simple personal regard. Some make arrangements for unimportant events, couched in phrase as commonplace as possible. Others flash new rays into unthought-of places in natures that are dear to all of us. But why we should be expected to care whether Carlyle wrote with a bad pen or a good one, or to be interested in Hawthorne's apology for breaking his Sunday dinner engagement at the Longfellow's, is quite impossible to imagine. Weeding is even more desirable among Longfellow's own letters, and through the pages of his journal, however, than among those of his friends. His biographer has had a vast and voluminous quantity of material to select from, and apparently, to the dismayed perception of the reader, he has selected it all! It sounds like heresy, but we have two bulky volumes to bear us out in the assertion that little of Longfellow's writing here, either to his friends or in his diary, rises above the simple natural transcription of the surface-thought of a kindly cultured soul, with a tendency to poetic expression; and much of it drops from this average to a commonplace that kinship or friendship alone could invest with a particle of interest. Of fully one-third of it this is a fair sample, to his father:—

"I promise myself great pleasure from my visit to England. You know that I am to stay with Dickens while in London; and besides his own agreeable society I shall enjoy that of the most noted literary men of the day,—which will be a great gratification to me. I hope to have time to run up to Edinboro' this time, never having penetrated into Scotland. That, however, must depend upon circumstances." Or this from his journal:—"I went to little Freddy's funeral. A Lynn clergyman said a few words of consolation and a prayer. Then the undertaker said in a tone to grate upon every tender feeling, 'An opportunity now presents itself to see the corpse.' The father, mother, brothers and sisters, passed from one room to another to take a last look. It was very affecting. There were two children's parties in the afternoon."

This is disappointing to say the least of it.

The book is full of the candid records of a simple, uneventful, and, for the most part, happy life, but the most vivid impression left by them is that the recorder found his task anything but a felicitous one. Again and again Longfellow proclaims himself no letter writer, and his journal jottings are easily seen to be chiefly of a very perfunctory nature. Here and there is a picture, a witticism, a tender thought, but not of occurrence frequent enough to characterize the book. And while we would not fail of gratitude for the nine hundred varying pages, we cannot but feel that Mr. Samuel Longfellow has been too liberal, and that we might have been better content with a smaller dole.

Moreover, Longfellow's life must have held a story apart from its mere circumstances and vicissitudes. This story his biographer has failed to tell us, for all his most conscientious endeavour. Relationship is unfortunately not *rapproch*. Happily the story may yet be told. Somebody has suggested Mr. Lowell for the gracious task. Surely there are none fitter. To fully know that strange creation, a poet,—an entity so independent of its fleshly garment—one must be akin in a different sense from Mr. Samuel Longfellow's relationship. In the meantime, while we wait for bread, we may accept these comparative husks with a strong reverence for what they once meant to America's sweetest singer, and to those who loved him best.

JEANNETTE DUNCAN.

MR. GLADSTONE.

WE are all too ready to be interested in somebodies, and all too careless of principles, whether great or small. So far, I believe, Mr. Gladstone's latest essay in destruction is rather a personal triumph than not. That he proposes to break up the Empire, and buy the Irish out of Westminster and the opportunity of obstruction, seems to have awakened very little excitement and not much indignation. The great feature of the situation is that here is a man who at seventy-seven is able to speak for three hours and a half on end. That said speech is a complete and absolute contradiction of over half a century of public life, is little or nothing to the purpose; as little is it that he is commonly reported to have passed the narrow line by which great wits are divided from madness, and to be practically no longer responsible for his actions; as little that his ministers have left him one by one, and that he is alone against England, save for a doctrinaire like Mr. John Morley and an adventurer like Vernon Harcourt. He is really a "miraculous Premier;" and that is sufficient. At threescore and seventeen he can talk for four hours at a time; and the man who can do that is privileged to behave as he lists, and make ducks and drakes of the universe, if his humour that way inclines. Into the great question involved in the matter of this prodigy of oratory the nation does not seem disposed to enter. It may be right; it may be wrong; it is enough that it is Gladstone.

It is on this point of oratory that Mr. Gladstone is able to hold his own against the four corners of the state in arms. He has the oratorical temperament, the orator's voice, the orator's mind. He is irresistibly persuasive; he projects himself upon his audience in the same way with a great actor, and convinces them not through their intellects, but only through their emotions. For the moment your belief in him is an enthusiasm; it is only next morning, when you come to read in cold print what before you had but heard, that you discover your error, and recognize that what you mistook for culmination of reason, argument, statesmanship, is no more than an effect of voice and manner and personality—in a word is only William Ewart Gladstone. It is a magnificent quality; but it is not without its defects. I think it has made Home Rule at least distantly inevitable, and civil war a possibility the opposite of improbable or remote; and I cannot help wishing it had been better bestowed, or that its possessor had died ten years ago.—London Letter in the *Critic*.

HENRY CLAY once accused John Randolph of being an aristocrat. In a voice whose shrill, piercing tones penetrated every ear in the House Randolph exclaimed: "If a man is known by the company he keeps, the gentleman who has just sat down is more of an aristocrat than I claim to be; for he spends most of his nights in the company of kings and queens and knaves."

* "Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow." Edited by Samuel Longfellow. In two volumes. Boston: Ticknor and Co.