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Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Among American poets Longfellow is ranked as the most popular. Eminently equipped both by natural endowment and by social and scholastic culture, he entered the ranks of literature at the age of twenty-five, or soon thereafter, while serving as professor of modern languages and literature in Bowdoin College. His first productions were in prose, but his poetical talents were soon revealed and thenceforward he became a continual contributor to verse.

Highly favored in the possession of am-

favorite with two continents of Anglo-Saxons.

Comprehensive and varied as his verse is, it possesses the charm of being universally intelligible. Combining delicacy of touch with unity of thought in many of his short poems, Longfellow has made them gems in the universal literature of the English tongue. The memory of the rhythm and sentiment of such minor poems as the 'Psalm of Life,' 'The Light of the Stars,' 'The Village Blacksmith,' and others, is most pleasing. Short as these poems are, they are symmetrical of structure, as 'Evangeline' and 'Hiawatha.' Two of his poems,

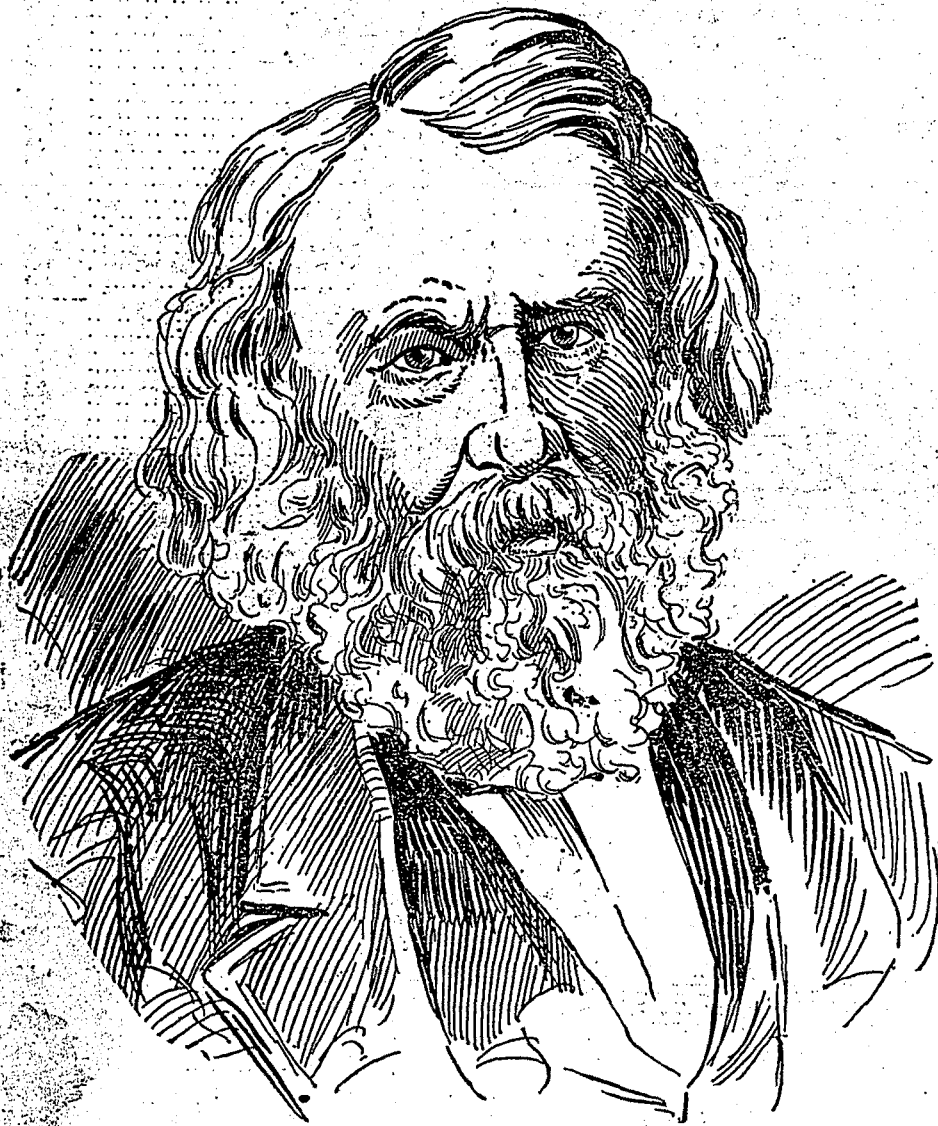
elements he pleases both the eye and the ear.

Though possessing gifts of a very high order, Longfellow is not so exquisitely talented as are some others. Whence, then, his universal popularity? It is due to the fact that his chosen themes are of general interest, and that he has wrought within the range of ordinary thought and sentiment. This has caught the public eye and won the general heart. He addresses the sympathies along the avenues of ordinary approach and throws around trite thought a mystic charm of loveliness. He raises the kindly affections, the moral sentiments, the joys, regrets, aspirations, loves, and wishes of the heart from the ordinary, sorrow-beaten ways of action and gives to them a gladness and sunniness as they move along the ways marked out by the subtle genius of the poet. There is an accommodation of genius to the peculiar demands of each subject as well as to its application to those to whom it is addressed. His poems 'God's Acre,' and 'The Village Blacksmith' are invested with a rugged grandeur befitting the theme and the thought. On the other hand, where can be found a more delicate creation than is seen in his 'Maidenhood?' He takes with him to the performance of each separate task a power that is not strained or that is not the least artificial, but that is equally superior in character, in the numerous applications of his genius, to the subjects that claim his poetic attention. This serves to impart to his verse a pleasant sweetness that elevates while it woos, and stimulates while it charms.

Milton's ideal poet is impersonated in Longfellow—his life itself was a poem. His dignity and grace, the majesty of his bearing, the simplicity of his life, manners and even the deftness of his garb made him a living, moving poem. No harsh word fell from his lips, and not one is found in the varied range of his productions. Himself was a type of his own tranquil and healthful verse. The highest expression of courtesy, gentleness, sincerity, and manly beauty were embodied in the life and character of Longfellow. That life was pictured in the flow of the river Charles which rolled in full view of the poet's Cambridge home. Of that stream he sang in symbolic song:—

'Oft in sadness and in illness,
I have watched thy current glide,
'Till the beauty of its stillness
Overflowed me like a tide;
And in better hours and brighter,
When I saw the waters gleam,
I have felt my heart beat lighter,
And leap onward with thy stream.'

His longer poems are not always great; really, they are of very unequal merit. His 'Hiawatha,' which excited profound admiration at first, came at last to be regarded, or at least much of it, as mere platitudinous prose. It has long ago ceased to be regarded as a picture of Indian life and character. Likewise his 'Golden Legend,' while it contains many beautiful passages, has not the elements that will make it permanently a great work. Longfellow excels in his lyrics. These are the poems that probe to the heart of humanity and create melody



HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

Born Feb. 27, 1807.—Died March 24, 1882.

ple means, Longfellow enjoyed leisure far above that of many of his contemporaries. Expansive culture and extensive foreign travel greatly enhanced his facilities, and afforded him opportunity for the accomplishment of immense results. And it may be added that his accomplishments were commensurate with his advantages. The fame which he enjoys throughout Europe and America attests his superiority as a poet.

Longfellow is, beyond doubt, the greatest of the poets of America. His breadth of sympathy, his sweep and variety of acquisition, his vivid imagination, the music and weight of his verse and the poise, gentleness, purity of his character make him a

'Maidenhood' and 'Endymion' especially denote the exquisite flavor, softness, and refinement of Longfellow's imaginative faculty. Their lack of popularity is due to the subtle forces which inhere within them.

The ability of Longfellow to reflect, by means of word imagery, a scene, a spot, an occasion, or a person, is unexcelled. This power is one of his chiefest. It is probably impossible for any poet to accomplish this so successfully without his perception of objects being manifold over that of the reader. The metrical sphere of Longfellow was a broad one. His wonderful ability to adjust metre to special subjects gives to him the artistic mastery of sound to support vision in the combination of which