

Contributed.

LONGFELLOW'S "HIAWATHA."

EVER since the landing of the first pioneers of American civilization at Plymouth Rock, our literature has been flooded with Indian tales, from the yellow-covered "dime novel," which fills the school-boy's mind with "horror and amaze," to the finest creations of the genius of J. Fenimore Cooper.

But it remained for the late "Poet Laureate" of America, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, to tell stories

"From the forests and the prairies,
From the mountains, moors and fenlands,"

in a form to be read with pleasure, even in the student's den and the lady's boudoir.

The hero, Hiawatha, from his miraculous birth among the flowers, accompanied by all the fiction of heathen superstition, to his departure

"To the portals of the Sunset,
To the region of the homewind,"

in search of our Saviour, is a proof of the beautiful imagination of the author.

Clustered around him we find many pleasing characters—as "Minnehaha," who presents at first a perfect example of an innocent, coy maiden, and afterward of a true and good wife.

In "Nokomis," who spoils the childhood and guards the manhood of Hiawatha as only a grandmother can, many of us find a picture of our own home life. Hiawatha's two friends,

"Chibiabos, the musician,
And the very strong man, Kwasind,"

present to us the rare picture of true, manly friendship. But when we consider the supernatural enemies with whom our hero had to cope, we feel as if we had culled a page from the "Arabian Nights."

In its grandly rolling lines, every one can find something to interest him. The student in philology is interested in the Indian nomenclature, and the origin and cause of picture writing; the archaeologist, in the curious romance of the "peace-pipe;" the humanitarian, in the benevolent character of Hiawatha; the lover, in his successful wooing; and the christian in his final conversion.

Critics have condemned, in no mild terms, the odd and certainly original versification. That it is a departure from all established poetical canons, and orthodox blank verse we cannot deny, but

that there is something in its musical rhythm and natural scansion, in its sonorous thunders and its rippling whispers, that thrills our every sense, all must acknowledge. The very rustling of the trees, the rippling of the streams, and the singing of the birds, are stereotyped in the quaint lines. We feel ourselves standing anxiously at the side of Hiawatha during his contest with the slayer of his mother, and as the critical moment approaches, we feel that *our* muscles are knit, and *our* nerves are strung for a mighty effort. We follow him through forests, over waters, and down precipices in his breathless pursuit of Yemadizze, and we stand with him, in his loneliness, watching by the snow-covered grave of his wife.

From first to last, we feel ourselves, not as spectators of a well acted drama, but as partakers in real life; and when joining hands with the characters of the story, we unite in the chorus of "Farewells" to Hiawatha, and feel as though a friend had left us for

"The Islands of the Blessed,
The kingdom of Ponemah,
The land of the Hereafter."

—A. R. C.

PENMANSHIP.

THIS branch of education has during past years been discussed and improved by our most eminent penmen, yet it seems as boundless and inexhaustible as the works of nature. In proportion to the amount of study, practice, and earnest research bestowed, will you reap its mysteries and multiplied beauties. It is both a science and an art, requiring years of intelligent and persistent study combined with practice, to become its master. You may have free access to the most accurately printed forms, or the more beautiful copies from the pen; yet it will prove a decided failure on your part should you receive no instruction on one of the most essential points, "movement," and this can only be imparted by an experienced and proficient teacher, who has the golden key which unlocks the secret workings of the arm and hand, and even then it requires a determined will to continue to the end. In the short experience of the writer, failure has followed the best efforts when the pupil under instruction has underrated movement, and would say when advised or shown how, "Oh! you are a natural penman; it is impossible for me ever to do that." This is one of the greatest stumbling blocks of the day to good writers; but it seems as though the