

### THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN THE POETRY OF WHITTIER.

The word "poet" means "a maker." It has a large significance. If you have the making of the songs of a nation, you can easily form its laws. Poetry has a vast influence upon the intellectual class which has so much to do with shaping the nation's destiny. The American Republic, in its brief literary history, has had four poets of the first rank. Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier and Bryant are worthy to be considered among the great teachers and inspirers of thought in this century. They were all men of lofty moral aim. The tendency of their writings is elevating. They had no sympathy with the Voluptuary School. They represent the formative period of American literature. Poets are impressed by the condition of affairs in which they find themselves. While they impress their age, their age also impresses them. Think of the rapid rise of the American people since the period of Whittier's youth. Modern inventions have changed the face of the country. Important public institutions have sprung into being with incredible rapidity. Whittier was a typical American. He believed in his country and sought her good. He had a great admiration for the sovereign people. He recognizes that the Almighty is powerful in the moral constitution of man. He is the poet of Liberty. His whole life and thinking are marked by freedom from constraint. On the Slave Question, he gives no uncertain sound. Many would consider him a bitter extremist. He viewed the subject from the standpoint of an earnest religious life. His view is accepted by all devout men to-day. The image of God must not be sold. He freely denounces ministers of religion who use their high office to buttress slavery. He regards them as untrue to their Divine commission. His whole being is thrilled by a mighty moral indignation. With Lowell, he believes

"They enslave their children's children  
Who make compromise with sin."