

Tea Time: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

post by Wende

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW was born in Portland, Maine, February 27, 1807. He was educated at Bowdoin College. After his graduation from college he spent several years abroad and upon his return to America held professorships of Modern Languages and Literature first in Bowdoin and later in Harvard College. When he moved to Cambridge and began his active work at Harvard, he took up his residence in the historic Craigie House, overlooking the Charles River—a house in which George Washington had been quartered at in 1775. At Cambridge he was a friend of authors Hawthorne, Holmes, Emerson, Lowell, and Alcott.



Longfellow was the poet who had spoken most sincerely and sympathetically to the hearts of the common people and to children. His poems were often of home-life, simple hopes, and of true religious faith. His best-known long poems are "Evangeline," "Hiawatha," "The Building of the Ship," and "The Courtship of Miles Standish." He made a fine translation of Dante's "Divine Comedy." Among his many short poems, "Excelsior," "The Psalm of Life," "The Wreck of the Hesperus," "The Village Blacksmith," and "Paul Revere's Ride" are continuously popular. Longfellow was also known as the "Children's Poet," as his child-like spirit - affectionate, loyal, eager for romance and knightly adventure – in his poem "The Children's Hour" helps to show.

Longfellow died in 1882. He was the first American writer who was honored by a memorial in Westminster Abbey.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the Children's Hour.

I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened,
And voices soft and sweet.

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.

A whisper, and then a silence;
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.

A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
By three doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall!

They climb up into my turret
O'er the arms and back of my chair;
If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.

They almost devour me with kisses;
Their arms about me entwine;
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,
Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old mustache as I am
Is not a match for you all?

I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down into the dungeon
In the round-tower of my heart.

And there will I keep you forever,
Yes, forever and a day,
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And molder in dust away!

Read

The Complete Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow can be downloaded for free [here](#).

Poetry for Young People: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Extend the Learning

Recite and/or memorize the poem “The Children’s Hour”

Record what you learn about Henry Wadsworth Longfellow on the notebooking page.

Analyze “The Children’s Hour” using the study notes.

Tea Time Treat

Smother your children with kisses, baking [Magical Kiss Cookies](#) together.

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THE CHILDREN'S HOUR by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

¹Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the Children's Hour.

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The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened,
And voices soft and sweet.

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Descending the broad hall stair,
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And Edith with golden hair.

⁴A whisper, and then a silence;
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⁵A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
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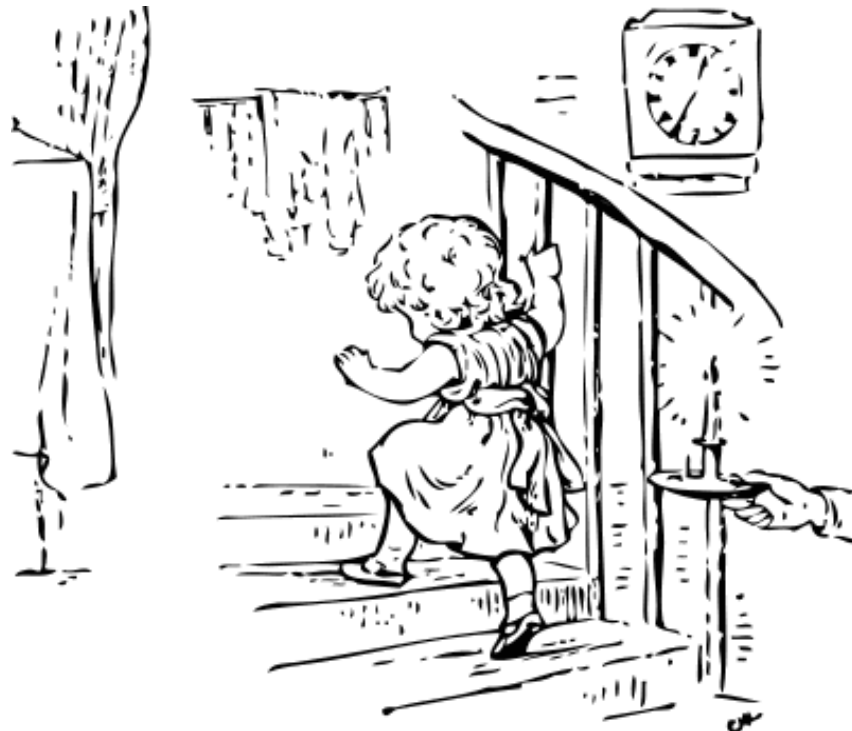
⁶They climb up into my turret
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Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old mustache as I am
Is not a match for you all?

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But put you down into the dungeon
In the round-tower of my heart.

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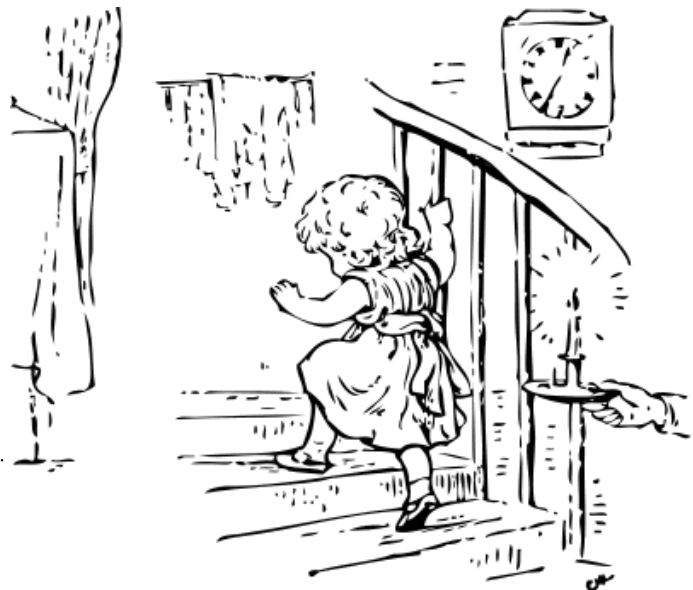
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THE CHILDREN'S HOUR by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

First Stanza

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the Children's Hour.

Second Stanza

I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened,
And voices soft and sweet.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Third Stanza

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra.
And Edith with golden hair.

Fourth Stanza

A whisper, and then a silence;
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Fifth Stanza

A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
By three doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall!

Sixth Stanza

They climb up into my turret
O'er the arms and back of my chair;
If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

First Stanza

*Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the Children's Hour.*

Second Stanza

*I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened,
And voices soft and sweet.*

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Third Stanza

*From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra.
And Edith with golden hair.*

Fourth Stanza

*A whisper, and then a silence;
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.*

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Fifth Stanza

*A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
By three doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall!*

Sixth Stanza

*They climb up into my turret
O'er the arms and back of my chair;
If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.*

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Seventh Stanza

*They almost devour me with kisses;
Their arms about me entwine;
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!*

Eighth Stanza

*Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti,
Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old mustache as I am
Is not a match for you all?*

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Ninth Stanza

*I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart,
But put you down into the dungeon
In the round-tower of my heart.*

Tenth Stanza

*And there will I keep you forever,
Yes, forever and a day,
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And molder in dust away!*

***The Children's Hour* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

Study Notes

Define:

Chamber: _____

Bishop of Bingen: _____

Raid: _____

Banditti: _____

Molder in dust away: _____

Interpret:

Tell, in your own words, what you think Longfellow had been doing in his study before the children came down to him, and why there was a "pause in the day's occupations."

Examine:

Look at the individual elements of the poem. Give examples of the following:

Alliteration -the repetition of initial consonant sounds in neighboring words.

Metaphors are comparisons between two unlike things, not using the words "like" or "as." The last six stanzas of the poem contain many metaphors. Find at least five:

_____ was metaphorical for _____

_____ was metaphorical for _____

_____ was metaphorical for _____

_____ was metaphorical for _____

_____ was metaphorical for _____

Evaluate:

Which stanza of this poem do you like best? Why?

***The Children's Hour* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow**

Answer Key

Define:

Chamber: bedroom

Bishop of Bingen: Hatto, who starved the poor and was shut up in a tower, where mice devoured him

Raid: attack made to get something

Banditti: robbers

Molder in dust away: lose their form and become earth again

Interpret:

Tell, in your own words, what you think Longfellow had been doing in his study before the children came down to him, and why there was a "pause in the day's occupations."

Answers will vary. May include the likelihood of him writing poetry in his study, and taking a break to play with his children.

Examine:

Look at the individual elements of the poem. Give examples of the following:

Alliteration -the repetition of initial consonant sounds in neighboring words.

Between the dark and the daylight

Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti

And voices soft and sweet

I have you fast in my fortress

They are plotting and planning together

But put you down into the dungeon

Metaphors are comparisons between two unlike things, not using the words "like" or "as." The last six stanzas of the poem contain many metaphors. Find at least five:

Castle wall

was metaphorical for

Longfellow's study

Turret

was metaphorical for

the tower of his desk/chair

Banditti

was metaphorical for

the sneaking little girls

Scaled the walls

was metaphorical for

got into the study, as soldiers

climb over the walls of a castle

Old mustache

was metaphorical for

so fierce a soldier

Fast in my fortress

was metaphorical for

held firmly by my love

Dungeon

was metaphorical for

lock up, as an underground

prison

Round tower

was metaphorical for

Longfellow's heart, as the safest

place for a prisoner

Evaluate:

Which stanza of this poem do you like best? Why?

Answers will vary.

Instructions for mini-book:

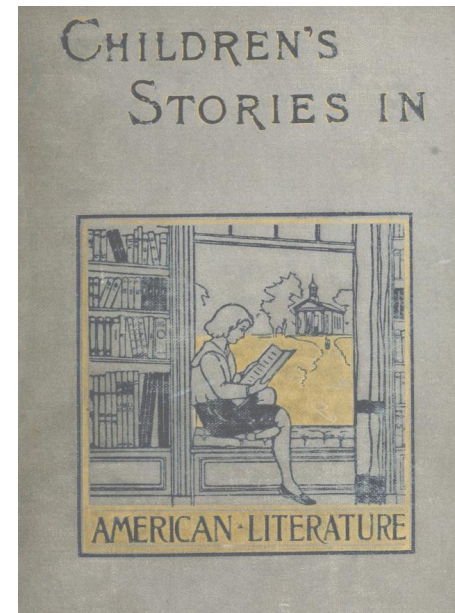
Print out all pages after these instructions.

Mountain fold all pages so print is on outside.

Place pages inside cover and staple close to fold, making sure to catch all pages.

*The Story
of
Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow*

excerpted from



BY Henrietta Christian Wright

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HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

1807-1882

Almost any summer day in the early part of the century a blue-eyed, brown-haired boy might have been seen lying under a great apple-tree in the garden of an old house in Portland, forgetful of everything else in the world save the book he was reading.

The boy was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and the book might have been *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Arabian Nights*, or *Don Quixote*, all of which were prime favorites, or, possibly, it was Irving's *Sketch-Book*, of which he was so fond that even the covers delighted him, and whose charm remained unbroken throughout life. Years afterward, when, as a famous man of letters, he was called upon to pay his tribute to the memory of Irving, he could think of no more tender praise than to speak with grateful affection of the book which had so fascinated him as a boy, and whose pages still led him back into the "haunted chambers of youth."

Portland was in those days a town of wooden houses, with streets shaded with trees, and the waters of the sea almost dashing up to its doorways. At its back great stretches of woodland swept the country as far as the eye could see, and low hills served as watch-towers over the deep in times of war. It was during Longfellow's childhood that the British ship *Boxer* was captured by the *Enterprise* in the famous sea-fight of the War of 1812; the two captains, who had fallen in the battle, were buried side by side in the cemetery at Portland, and the whole town came together to do

honor to the dead commanders. Long afterward Longfellow speaks of this incident in his poem entitled *My Lost Youth*, and recalls the sound of the cannon booming across the waters, and the solemn stillness that followed the news of the victory.

It is in the same poem that we have a picture of the Portland of his early life, and are given glimpses of the black wet wharves, where the ships were moored all day long as they worked, and also the Spanish sailors "with bearded lips" who seemed as much a mystery to the boy as the ships themselves. These came and went across the sea, always watched and waited for with greatest interest by the children, who loved the excitement of the unloading and loading, the shouts of the surveyors who were measuring the contents of cask and hogshead; the songs of the negroes working the pulleys, the jolly good-nature of the seamen strolling through the streets, and, above all, the sight of the strange treasures that came from time to time into one home or another—bits of coral, beautiful sea-shells, birds of resplendent plumage, foreign coins, which looked odd even in Portland, where all the money nearly was Spanish—and the hundred and one things dear to the hearts of children and sailors.

Longfellow's boyhood was almost a reproduction of that of some Puritan ancestor a century before. He attended the village school, played ball in summer and skated in winter, went to church twice every Sunday, and, when service was over, looked at the curious pictures in the family Bible, and heard from his mother's lips the stories of David and Jonathan and Joseph, and at all times had food for his imagination in

the view of bay stretching seaward, on one hand, and on the other valley farms and groves spreading out to the west.

But although the life was severe in its simplicity, it was most sweet and wholesome for the children who grew up in the home nest, guarded by the love that was felt rather than expressed, and guided into noble conceptions of the beauty and dignity of living. This home atmosphere impressed itself upon Longfellow unconsciously, as did the poetic influences of nature, and had just as lasting and inspiring an effect upon his character, so that truth, duty, fine courage were always associated with the freshness of spring, the early dawn, the summer sunshine, and the lingering sadness of twilight.

It is the spiritual insight, thus early developed, that gives to Longfellow's poetry some of its greatest charms.

It was during his school-boy days that Longfellow published his first bit of verse. It was inspired by hearing the story of a famous fight which took place on the shores of a small lake called Lovell's Pond, between the hero Lovell and the Indians. Longfellow was deeply impressed by this story and threw his feeling of admiration into four stanzas, which he carried with a beating heart down to the letter-box of the *Portland Gazette*, taking an opportunity to slip the manuscript in when no one was looking.

A few days later Longfellow watched his father unfold the paper, read it slowly before the fire, and finally

leave the room, when the sheet was grasped by the boy and his sister, who shared his confidence, and hastily scanned. The poem was there in the "Poets' Corner" of the *Gazette*, and Longfellow was so filled with joy that he spent the greater part of the remainder of the day in reading and re-reading the verses, becoming convinced toward evening that they possessed remarkable merit. His happiness was dimmed, however, a few hours later, when the father of a boy friend, with whom he was passing the evening, pronounced the verses stiff and entirely lacking in originality, a criticism that was quite true and that was harder to bear because the critic had no idea who the author was. Longfellow slipped away as soon as possible to nurse his wounded feelings in his own room, but instead of letting the incident discourage him, began, with renewed vigor, to write verses, epigrams, essays, and even tragedies, which he produced in a literary partnership with one of his friends. None of these effusions had any literary value, being no better than any boy of thirteen or fourteen would produce if he turned his attention to composition instead of bat and ball.

Longfellow remained in Portland until his sixteenth year, when he went to Bowdoin College, entering the sophomore class. Here he remained for three years, gradually winning a name for scholarship and character that was second to none.

His love for reading still continued, Irving remaining a favorite author, while Cooper was also warmly appreciated. From the *Sketch-Book* he would turn to the exciting pages of *The Spy*, and the announcement

of a new work by either of their authors was looked forward to as an event of supreme importance. From time to time he wrote verses which appeared in the periodicals of the day, and as his college life neared its close he began to look toward literature as the field for his future work, and it was with much disappointment that he learned that his father wished him to study law.

But what the effect of such a course may have had upon his mind so filled with the love of poetry, and so consecrated to the ideal, will never be known, as the end of his college life brought to him a chance which, for the moment, entirely satisfied the desire of his heart.

This was an offer from the college trustees that he should visit Europe for the purpose of fitting himself for a professorship of modern languages, and that upon his return he should fill that chair, newly established at Bowdoin.

This was the happiest fortune that could come to Longfellow in the beginning of his literary career. Accordingly, at the age of nineteen, he sailed for France in good health, with fine prospects, and with as fair a hope for the future as ever was given.

Longfellow remained abroad three years, studying and absorbing all the new conditions which were broadening his mind, and fitting him for his after-career. He visited France, Spain, Italy, and Germany, meeting with adventure everywhere, and storing up memory after memory that came back to his call in after-years to serve some purpose of his art.

We have thus preserved in his works the impressions that Europe then made upon a young American, who had come there to supplement his education by studying at the universities, and whose mind was alive to all the myriad forms of culture denied in his own land.

The vividness of these early impressions was seen in all his work, and was perhaps the first reflection of the old poetic European influence that began to be felt in much American poetry, where the charm of old peasant love-songs and roundelays, heard for centuries among the lower classes of Spain, France, and Italy, was wrought into translations and transcriptions so perfect and spirited that they may almost rank with original work.

One of Longfellow's great pleasures while on this trip was the meeting with Irving in Spain, where the latter was busy upon his *Life of Columbus*; and Irving's kindness on this occasion was always affectionately remembered.

Longfellow returned to America after three years' absence, and at once began his duties at Bowdoin College, where he remained three years, when he left to take a professorship at Harvard, which he had accepted with the understanding that he was to spend a year and a half abroad before commencing his work.

The results of his literary labors while at Bowdoin were the publication of a series of sketches of European life called *Outre Mer*, in two volumes; a translation from the Spanish of the *Coplas de Manrique*, and some essays

in the *North American Review* and other periodicals. And considering the demand upon his time which his college duties made, this amount of finished work speaks well for his industry, since it does not include a number of text-books prepared for the use of his pupils, and numberless papers, translations, and other literary miscellany necessary to his work as a teacher of foreign languages. *Outre Mer*, which had first appeared in part in a periodical, was very favorably received. It was really the story of picturesque Europe translated by the eye and heart of a young poet.

After his return to America Longfellow settled down to the routine of college work, which was interrupted for the next ten years only by his literary work, which from this time on began to absorb him more and more. Two years after his return he published his first volume of poems and his romance *Hyperion*. In *Hyperion* Longfellow related some of the experiences of his own travels under the guise of the hero, who wanders through Europe, and the book is full of the same biographical charm that belongs to *Outre Mer*. Here the student life of the German youth, the songs they sang, the books they read, and even their favorite inns are noted, while the many translations of German poetry opened a new field of delight to American readers. It was well received by the public, who appreciated its fine poetic fancy and its wealth of serious thought.

But it was not by his prose that Longfellow touched the deepest sympathies of his readers, and the publication of his first volume of poetry a few months later showed his real position in the world of American letters. This little book, which was issued under the title *Voices of*

the Night, consisted of the poems that had so far appeared in the various magazines and papers, a few poems written in his college days, and some translations from the French, German, and Spanish poets.

In this volume occurs some of Longfellow's choicest works, the gem of the book being the celebrated *A Psalm of Life*.

It is from this point that Longfellow goes onward always as the favorite poet of the American people. The *Psalm of Life* had been published previously in a magazine without the author's name, and it had no sooner been read than it seemed to find its way into every heart. Ministers read it to their congregations all over the country, and it was sung as a hymn in many churches. It was copied in almost every newspaper in the United States; it was recited in every school. To young and old alike it brought its message, and its voice was recognized as that of a true leader. The author of *Outre Mer* and *Hyperion* had here touched hands with millions of his brothers and sisters, and the clasp was never unloosened again while he lived.

In the same collection occurs *The Footsteps of Angels*, another well-beloved poem, and one in which the spirit of home-life is made the inspiration.

Longfellow's poems now followed one another in rapid succession, appearing generally at first in some magazine and afterward in book form in various collections under different titles.

His greatest contributions to American literature are his *Evangeline* and *Hiawatha*, and a score of shorter poems, which in themselves would give the author a high place in any literature.

In *Evangeline* Longfellow took for his theme the pathetic story of the destruction of the Acadian villages by the English during the struggle between the English and French for the possession of Canada. In this event many families and friends were separated never again to be reunited, and the story of *Evangeline* is the fate of two young lovers who were sent away from their homes in different ships, and who never met again until both were old, and one was dying in the ward of a public hospital. Longfellow has made of this sad story a wondrously beautiful tale, that reads like an old legend of Grecian Arcadia.

The description of the great primeval forests, stretching down to the sea; of the villages and farms scattered over the land as unprotected as the nests of the meadow lark; of the sowing and harvesting of the peasant folk, with their *fêtes* and churchgoing, their weddings and festivals, and the pathetic search of *Evangeline* for her lost lover Gabriel among the plains of Louisiana, all show Longfellow in his finest mood as a poet whom the sorrows of mankind touched always with reverent pity, as well as a writer of noble verse.

Everywhere that the English language is read *Evangeline* has passed as the most beautiful folk-story that America has produced, and the French Canadians, the far-away brothers of the Acadians, have included Longfellow among their national poets.

Among them *Evangeline* is known by heart, and the cases are not rare where the people have learned English expressly for the purpose of reading Longfellow's poem in the original, a wonderful tribute to the poet who could thus touch to music one of the saddest memories of their race.

In *Hiawatha* Longfellow gave to the Indian the place in poetry that had been given him by Cooper in prose. Here the red man is shown with all his native nobleness still unmarred by the selfish injustice of the whites, while his inferior qualities are seen only to be those that belong to mankind in general.

Hiawatha is a poem of the forests and of the dark-skinned race who dwelt therein, who were learned only in forest lore and lived as near to nature's heart as the fauns and satyrs of old. Into this legend Longfellow has put all the poetry of the Indian nature, and has made his hero, Hiawatha, a noble creation that compares favorably with the King Arthur of the old British romances. Like Arthur, Hiawatha has come into the world with a mission for his people; his birth is equally mysterious and invests him at once with almost supernatural qualities. Like Arthur, he seeks to redeem his kingdom from savagery and to teach the blessing of peace.

From first to last Hiawatha moves among the people, a real leader, showing them how to clear their forests, to plant grain, to make for themselves clothing of embroidered and painted skins, to improve their fishing-grounds, and to live at peace with their neighbors. Hiawatha's own life was one that was lived

for others. From the time when he was a little child and his grandmother told him all the fairy-tales of nature, up to the day when, like Arthur, he passed mysteriously away through the gates of the sunset, all his hope and joy and work were for his people. He is a creature that could only have been born from a mind as pure and poetic as that of Longfellow.

All the scenes and images of the poem are so true to nature that they seem like very breaths from the forest. We move with Hiawatha through the dewy birchen aisles, learn with him the language of the nimble squirrel and of the wise beaver and mighty bear, watch him build his famous canoe, and spend hours with him fishing in the waters of the great inland sea, bordered by the pictured rocks, painted by nature herself. Longfellow's first idea of the poem was suggested, it is said, by his hearing a Harvard student recite some Indian tales. Searching among the various books that treated of the American Indian, he found many legends and incidents that preserved fairly well the traditional history of the Indian race, and grouping these around one central figure and filling in the gaps with poetic descriptions of the forests, mountains, lakes, rivers, and plains, which made up the abode of these picturesque people, he thus built up the entire poem. The metre used is that in which the Kalevala, the national epic of the Finns is written, and the Finnish hero, Wainamoinen, in his gift of song and his brave adventures, is not unlike the great Hiawatha. Among Longfellow's other long poems are: *The Spanish Student*, a dramatic poem founded upon a Spanish romance; *The Divine Tragedy*, and *The Golden Legend*, founded upon the life of Christ; *The Courtship*

of *Miles Standish*, a tale of Puritan love-making in the time of the early settlers, and *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, which were a series of poems of adventure supposed to be related in turn by the guests at an inn.

But it is with such poems as *Evangeline* and *Hiawatha*, and the shorter famous poems like *A Psalm of Life*, *Excelsior*, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, *The Building of the Ship*, *The Footsteps of Angels* that his claim as the favorite poet of America rests. *Evangeline* and *Hiawatha* marked an era in American literature in introducing themes purely American, while of the famous shorter poems each separate one was greeted almost with an ovation. *The Building of the Ship* was never read during the struggle of the Civil War without raising the audience to a passion of enthusiasm, and so in each of these shorter poems Longfellow touched with wondrous sympathy the hearts of his readers. Throughout the land he was revered as the poet of the home and heart, the sweet singer to whom the fireside and family gave ever sacred and beautiful meanings.

Some poems on slavery, a prose tale called *Kavanagh*, and a translation of *The Divine Comedy* of Dante must also be included among Longfellow's works; but these have never reached the success attained by his more popular poems which are known by heart by millions to whom they have been inspiration and comfort.

Longfellow died in Cambridge in 1882, in the same month in which was written his last poem, *The Bells of San Blas*, which concludes with these words:

"It is daybreak everywhere."