

The Nature of Longfellow's Poetry.

From *Susquehanna Journal*.
It is the power of expressing thought in language that raises man above the brute creation. It is thought, colored by imagination, fittingly clothed, and sent forth freighted with emotion, that has power among men and elevates its author to a plane nearer the Master Mind which created both. This form of expression is termed poetry; and in it is reflected, to a large extent, the character of individuals and the glory of nations.

Among the ancients, the gift of poetry was considered as almost divine and the highest honors are still accorded to poetic genius. When the poets of Greece and Rome sang, in lofty and majestic strains, they riveted the attention of the world upon them, and Grecian and Italian glory exists chiefly in the productions of their writers.

While England claims that in her matchless Milton is combined the strength of all his predecessors, America, with pride, places the ivy-crown upon the classic brow of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. An native ability, in height and depth of thought, and in majesty of style, Longfellow does not equal or even compare with the greatest poets of other nations; but no poetry is more truly national than the product of his pen, and dear to American hearts is anything that is American.

His verses are picturesque, musical, and through them all runs a spirit of devotion and a lofty sense of honor, which adds force to beauty. They do not partake of the rugged grandeur of towering mountains, nor come with the force of a mighty cataract, but are rather like the quiet levelness of the valley, where green fields, stretching away in the distance as far as the eye can reach, and a billowy sea of golden grain, and the dreamy song of the murmuring streams, stir the soul to its depths. Profound in simplicity, musical in rhythm, and forcible in theme, his poetry is the heritage of every American, learned or untaught.

Poets are influenced in their writings, by the vicissitudes of national life and religious belief. Grecian and Italian writers sang of the clashing of arms, the horrors of war, and the wrath or pleasure of the Gods. Longfellow wrote when the land of *Amperiana* *Blanche* was destined into full bloom, and freedom to worship God in his own way was the right of man. With the perfume of this national flower pervading every avenue of life, what wonder is it that the effect of poetry was to please. What an intrinsic value is placed upon time and deeds in the poem of "The Builders," and,—"Life is real, life is earnest, And the grave is not its goal," says his "Psalm of Life." These two have become household treasures, the delight of young and old.

When slavery, like a noxious insect, threatened to destroy the fruit of national prosperity, his soul in verse cried out against the curse. And so through-out his productions is good exalted and evil derided. The stories of "Evangeline," and her lost lover, and "Hiawatha," the ideal Indian, are touching in pathos and grandly poetic in recital, and until eclipsed by something more meritorious will be the national epics. 'Tis true that Alpine grandeur surpasses the beauty of the plain, but few are permitted to ascend the heights of Homeric thought while multitudes revel in the simple beauty of lesser elevations. As yet Longfellow is the brightest luminary in America's literary sky, and as such we honor him. R. M. G.

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