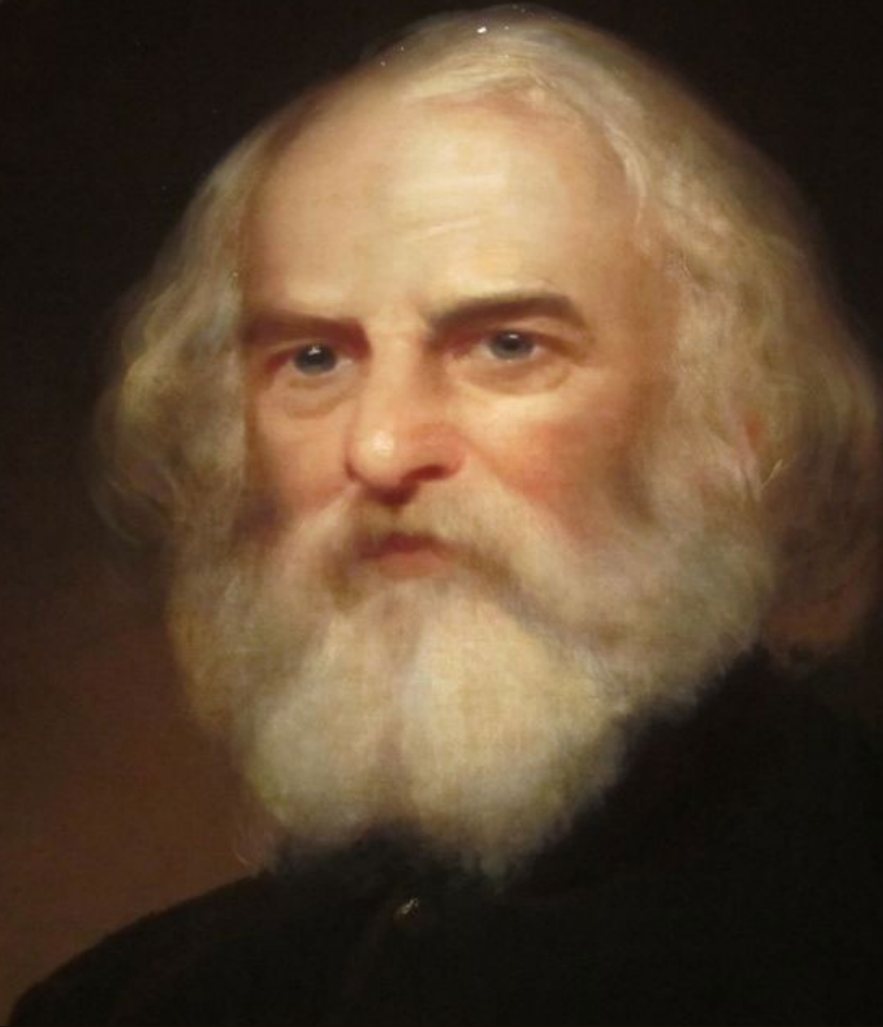


SAMUEL LONGFELLOW



LIFE OF HENRY  
WADSWORTH  
LONGFELLOW

VOLUME 1

# Life Of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Volume 1

## *With Extracts From His Journals And Correspondence*

**Samuel Longfellow**

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# **Life Of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Volume 1**

## **PREFACE.**

THE reader must be reminded at the outset, and must remember all along, that this is the Life of a man of letters. Mr. Longfellow was not that exclusively, but he was that supremely. He touched life at many points; and certainly he was no bookworm or dry-as-dust scholar shut up in a library. He kept the doors of his study always open, both literally and figuratively. But literature, as it was his earliest ambition, was always his most real interest; it was his constant point of view; it was his chosen refuge. His very profession was a literary one. Now, the life of a man of letters needs be unexciting and uneventful in the eyes of men of activities and affairs. In such a life, a new book is a great adventure, a new poem or tale a chief event. Such a life can be painted only by a multitude of minute touches. For this reason, and because it was desirable that he should tell his own story as far as possible, a large part of this biography is made up of extracts from a daily journal. By such a method could the reader best learn how a man of letters spends his time, and what occupies his thoughts. It brings the reader face to face with the author whom he has known in his books; letting him, as far as it is fitting, into his intimacy. It presupposes an interest in, and a familiarity with, the writings whose inception and completion are so frequently, if briefly, noted. It trusts much to the personal

interest which, in this instance, the writings seem in a remarkable degree to have inspired, an interest which it is believed this book, if it may in some things modify, will in no degree diminish. If in anything it should seem to fall short, let it be remembered that the poet had already put the best of himself into his books.

One word more. This is the Life of a man of letters who was a worker, a faithful user of his powers; one who had too much respect for his art ever to permit any carelessness in the execution or unworthiness in the theme. His art he valued, not for its own sake, but as a vehicle for noble, gentle, beautiful thought and sentiment. If he spoke of things common, it was to invest them with that charm of saying, or show that poetic element in them, which should lift them above the commonplace.

CAMBRIDGE, February 15, 1886.

## **CHAPTER I. EARLY DAYS IN THE HOME. 1807-1820.**

In all New England there is no pleasanter town than Portland, in the State of Maine. Built upon a peninsula in Casco Bay, it looks down upon the waters from a central ridge, and at each end rises into a hill. The eastern one of these commands an enchanting view down the bay and over its wooded islands. From the western height extends a charming prospect over lowlands and a tide-river indented with many shady coves, far away to the hill-ranges whose summits lie along the horizon. Highest of these is the peak of Mt. Washington, some seventy miles away as the bird flies, softly blue in summer, in winter dazzling white, in the northwest. The streets are shaded with arching elms, under

which one gets glimpses of the water, and are cooled in summer by the sea-breezes. The houses, of wood or brick, stand mostly apart from each other in green yards and gardens. On the outskirts of the town are fields and pastures, and a pretty piece of woods — a grove of oaks — long known as Deering's Woods; now, by gift of its inheritors, preserved as a park. There are pleasant drives along the neighboring shores. In summer numerous little steamboats run to the various islands of the bay, several of which are inhabited; and the waters are white with sails of pleasure boats, of fishing vessels, and of merchant ships bringing their cargoes to the wharves.

In the eastern quarter of the town, — the first settled, and for many years the "court end," — on the corner of Fore and Hancock streets, stands a house of three stories, somewhat spacious, and not without slight architectural pretensions of an old-fashioned sort. In its day it was a fine house, such as were built seventy or eighty years ago in all the New England sea-ports by well-to-do merchants and sea-captains, and was the home of one of these. Captain Samuel Stephenson. Built on a street that ran along the shore, only the door-yard, the street, and a little beach, separated it from the water. The house is still standing, but years ago the tide of fashion retreating westward left it bare, and it is now a tenement house. The beach in front of it has long been covered with the buildings of the Grand Trunk Railway.

In this house, on the twenty-seventh day of February, in the year 1807, was born Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. His parents were temporarily living there; spending the winter with his father's sister, Mrs. Stephenson. They had been married three years before, and had already one son.

The boy did not long remain in this house. When he was a little more than a year old, his parents removed to the house on Congress Street in which his childhood and youth were passed. This house, noted as having been the first brick house in Portland, had been built by his mother's father. General Peleg Wadsworth, in the years 1784-86. Now quite in the heart of the business quarter, it was then on the extreme outskirts of the town, in the midst of fields. Hither Zilpah Wadsworth, the boy's mother, had come when seven years old; here she was married; here she returned now with her husband and two boys, in 1808, to pass the rest of her life. She was the third of eleven children of Peleg Wadsworth and Elizabeth Bartlett, who had, after their marriage, removed to Portland from Duxbury in Massachusetts, whither their ancestors had emigrated from England. Their second son, Henry Wadsworth, was a lieutenant in the American navy: he had died, a young man of nineteen, in his country's service. "Preferring death to slavery," he had voluntarily perished, with his companions, in the fire-ship *Intrepid*, which was blown up before Tripoli in the night of September 4, 1804, to save it from falling into the enemy's hands. From him his sister had named her second son.

Beautiful in her youth, Mrs. Longfellow retained through later years of invalidism a sweet and expressive countenance, a slight but upright figure. From her must have come to her son the imaginative and romantic side of his nature. She was fond of poetry and music, and in her youth, of dancing and social gayety. She was a lover of nature in all its aspects. She would sit by a window during a thunder-storm, enjoying the excitement of its splendors. Her disposition, through all trials and sorrows, was always cheerful, — with a gentle and tranquil fortitude. Full of a tender, simple, unquestioning piety, she was a lover of church and sermon and hymn; a devout and constant

reader of the Bible, especially of its Psalms. She commended religion by its fairest fruits. It was the religion of the two great commandments. Despite her military traditions, and her having in her girlhood presented a flag, with a speech, to a company of soldiers, she had in maturer years a horror of war, and was an untiring advocate of peace. She was a kind friend and neighbor, a helper of the poor, a devoted mother to her children, whose confidant she was, the sharer of their little secrets and their joys, the ready comforter of their troubles, the patient corrector of their faults. Her sister, Lucia Wadsworth, lived with her, and was like a second mother to her children.





THE WADSWORTH-LONGFELLOW HOUSE, PORTLAND.

The boy's father, Stephen Longfellow, was a man much honored in the community for his ability in his profession of the law, for his sound good sense in affairs, for his high integrity, his liberality and public spirit, for his old-time courtesy of manners and cordial hospitality. Born in 1776, upon his father's farm in Gorham, he had graduated with

honor at Harvard College, where he was noted for his purity of character, his gentlemanly bearing, his buoyant spirits, and social warmth, as well as for his scholarship. He was classmate of Dr. Channing, Judge Story, Judge White, among others. He early took a high position at the Cumberland Bar. A "Federalist" in politics, he was sent as Representative to the Legislature of Massachusetts, in 1814, and was a member of that Hartford Convention of which so much evil came unjustly to be spoken. He also represented his State in the National Congress for one term, in 1822-24. Retiring from these public positions, he devoted himself assiduously to his profession, in which he was much absorbed, till increasing ill health gradually disabled him. In his family he was at once kind and strict, bringing up his children in habits of respect and obedience, of unselfishness, the dread of debt, and the faithful performance of duty.

In this home, with such a father and mother, in a circle which came to include four brothers and four sisters, Henry Longfellow grew up. The first glimpse we get of him is in a letter of his mother, when he was but eight months old: —

Hiram, October — , 1807.

You will perceive that I am in Hiram. I have been here two weeks with all my family excepting an essential part of it — my husband. He came with us, staid one day, and left us to attend to business he could not postpone.... You would be delighted with my little Stephen. He is an engaging little fellow, now that he can talk and begins to have some ideas. He will ask a thousand questions in a minute, and can manage his playthings and draw about his horse, — "Just like all children," you will say. No doubt of it; but it is the same to parents as if their child was the first in the world. I think you would like my little Henry W. He is an active

rogue, and wishes for nothing so much as singing and dancing. He would be very happy to have you raise him up to see the balls on the mirror... I should, I think, be fond of a country life. The retirement pleases me; and the stillness of the scene — when, after rambling miles without meeting any one, we seat ourselves by the side of the river, which we find unruffled by a breath of air — has a wonderful effect in tranquillizing the spirit, and calming every unpleasant emotion. Adieu, my dear brother, you will write me, I am sure; and if I have no time to answer, my little boys shall each of them write you a letter as soon as they can hold a pen.

Our next sight of him is in a military guise. The war of 1812 with England had broken out, and an invasion of Canada was talked of. A letter of his aunt (May 6, 1812) says: —

A prophet tells us that a part of this country is to be laid waste by a hurricane the tenth of this month. Another says that two thirds of the world will be destroyed on the fourth of July. Canada must be subdued before that time or the opportunity will be lost. Our little Henry is ready to march; he had his tin gun prepared and his head powdered a week ago.

When he next appears he has exchanged the musket for the pen. In a letter of Jan. 13, 1814, to her husband then attending the " General Court " in Boston, his mother sends this message from Henry: " Oh, tell papa I am writing at school — a, &, c; and send my love to him, and I hope he will bring me a drum." Not content with sending the message, he is eager to use his new accomplishment; and soon, with patient labor, he constructs with his own hand the following letter, the first which he ever wrote — who was to write so many:

Portland [Jan. — , 1814].

Dear Papa, — Ann wants a little Bible like little Betsey's. Will you please buy her one, if you can find any in Boston. I have been to school all the week, and got only seven marks. I shall have a billet on Monday. I wish you to buy me a drum.

Henry W. Longfellow.

It is pleasant to find him thinking of his sister's Bible before his own drum. The " marks " were for slight offences, doubtless; what the "billet" meant we shall see presently. To the boy's letter the father replied: —

... I have found a very pretty drum, with an eagle painted on it, but the man asks two dollars for it; and they do not let any vessels go from Boston to Portland now.

But if I can find any opportunity to send it down I shall buy it. And if I cannot, I shall buy something else which will please you as well. I am glad to hear that you have been a good boy at school and are likely to get a billet You must save all your billets till I get home.... If I can get time I shall write you and Stephen another letter, and tell you about the State House, and the theatre, and other things that are in Boston.

In a letter of his mother, in 1817, when he was ten years old, we get another picture of the brothers. Henry had lamed his elbow, turning a somersault in coming out of school, and had his arm in a sling. However —

He went to dancing-school Saturday afternoon, but excused himself from meeting on Sunday; Monday, attended at the Academy Examination; Tuesday, attended the [military]

Review. Wednesday afternoon the boys went to school to contend for the prize in reading. Henry was in high spirits. He "did not know as he should get it, but wanted to try, and have it over." Stephen was rather unwilling to go; he "knew he could not get the prize; he did his best last time and could not get it, and he could not read poetry." However, he went.... My pen glides with peculiar facility when I am writing to you, dear husband, about our children. I could now tell you a long story of the girls and of A , but I have not time this morning, as I have a mantua-maker to attend to.

It must have been earlier than this that his mother wrote of him: " Henry is reading Gay's Fables. He is quite indignant over the ' The Hare with Many Friends; ' — but now consoles himself with saying that he doesn't believe it is true!"

A friend of the family writes in 1877, —

Most distinctly do I recall the bright, pleasant boy as I often saw him at his father's house while I was living in Portland, in the years 1816-17. My recollections of those interviews in that time-honored mansion, and of the excellent man whose reception of me was ever cordial, and whose conversation was to me so agreeable and so instructive, have never ceased to be a pleasure.

Henry is remembered by others as a lively boy, with brown or chestnut hair, blue eyes, a delicate complexion, and rosy cheeks; sensitive, impressionable; active, eager, impetuous, often impatient; quick-tempered, but as quickly appeased; kind-hearted and affectionate, — the sun-light of the house. He had great neatness and love of order. He was always extremely conscientious, "remarkably solicitous always to do right," his mother wrote. " True, high-minded, and

noble, — never a mean thought or act," says his sister; "injustice in any shape he could not brook." He was industrious, prompt, and persevering; full of ardor, he went into everything he undertook with great zest.

With all his liveliness, he disliked loud noises and rude excitements. There is a family tradition of his having, on some Fourth of July, privately begged the maid to put cotton in his ears to deaden the sound of the cannon. But being asked if he was afraid, he indignantly denied it. He was fond of all boys' games, — ball, kite-flying, and swimming, in summer; in winter, snowballing, coasting, and skating. His elder brother was very fond of a gun, and many were the excursions to the neighboring woods and shores, and to the more distant marshes, in search of birds. But one day Henry came home with his eyes full of tears, and so grieved at heart because he had shot a robin that he never tried again. About fishing he was somewhat less tender-hearted, though never a sportsman.

His father could tell him of the theatre in Boston; but the drama seldom came to Portland. The circus and the menagerie were more frequent visitants. Eagerly attended, they were, of course, imitated at home. Feats of "grand and lofty tumbling" and horsemanship were exhibited for his sisters' benefit, the steed being a large wooden rocking-horse which stood in the back porch; but the family annals record that once, vaulting with too great vehemence over the horse's head, he brought the horse over with him, breaking his neck, — fortunately the horse's, not his own.

In the home, there were books and music. His father's library, not large, but well selected for the time, gave him, as he grew up, access to Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Dryden, Thomson, Goldsmith; the Spectator, the Rambler, the Lives of the Poets, Rasselas, Plutarch's Lives; Hume's,

Gibbon's, Gillies's and Robertson's Histories, and the like. For Sunday reading, which was scrupulously separated from that of "week-days," there were Hannah More's Works; for some reason, possibly theological. The Pilgrim's Progress seems not to have been on the shelves. Cowper's poetry the boy was fond of; and Moore's Lalla Rookh. Robinson Crusoe, of course, and the Arabian Nights were read by the children together; and Henry took delight in Don Quixote, and Ossian, and would go about the house declaiming the windy and misty utterances of the latter.

He had access, also, to the shelves of the old Portland Library. And sometimes, of evenings, he got permission to go down to Mr. Johnson's bookstore to look over the few new books that from time to time arrived from Boston. There the boy might listen, also, to his elders, John Neal and Nathaniel Deering, talking about literature.

He has himself left us a record of one part of his early reading: —

Every reader has his first book; I mean to say, one book among all others which in early youth first fascinates his imagination, and at once excites and satisfies the desires of his mind. To me, this first book was the Sketch Book of Washington Irving. I was a school-boy when it was published, and read each succeeding number with ever increasing wonder and delight, spell-bound by its pleasant humor, its melancholy tenderness, its atmosphere of reverie, — nay, even by its gray-brown covers, the shaded letters of its titles, and the fair clear type, which seemed an outward symbol of its style. — How many delightful books the same author has given us.... Yet still the charm of the Sketch-Book remains unbroken; the old fascination remains about it; and whenever I open its pages, I open also that

mysterious door which leads back into the haunted chambers of youth.

On Sundays, according to the habit of the time, all ordinary books and occupations were laid aside. There was church-going twice a day, — "going to meeting," it was always called, — never to be omitted by any of the family, save for reason of sickness. In the winter, Henry must often have carried for his mother, as he walked by her side, the little foot-stove of coals which in those days supplemented the very imperfect warming of the old First Parish meeting-house, where was the family pew. But in summer he carried flowers, — a bunch of pinks, or apple-blossoms from the great tree in the garden.

There were no Sunday-schools as yet; but on Sunday afternoons, after the meeting, the mother gathered her children around her, to read in turn from the great family Bible, and to look over, and talk over, its rude engravings of Scripture scenes and events; or to turn, for the hundredth time, to the "family record" of deaths and births which grew upon the pages between the Old and New Testaments. On Sunday evenings there was always the singing of hymns to the familiar psalmody of the old "Bridgewater Collection," — St. Martin's, and Dundee, and Brattle Street, with its favorite hymn by Helen Maria Williams, —

While Thee I seek, protecting Power, Be my vain wishes stilled.

In the congregation of the First Parish of Portland, the moderate Calvinism of the old preachers. Parson Smith and Parson Deane (the latter not unsuspected of Arminian leanings) had gradually passed into the early form of Unitarianism. The Rev. Ichabod Nichols was now its



minister, — a man of high intellectual power, an elevated reverential spirit, and great dignity of character and presence, whose retiring disposition alone kept him from being more widely known. Stephen Longfellow was one of his most valued parishioners. A classmate and intimate friend of Channing in his college years, he had followed the line of his friend's liberal thought. It is believed that it was at his instance that the old church covenant of the First Parish was modified in its doctrinal statement, before he could conscientiously assent to it in becoming a "church member." It was in the doctrine and the spirit of the early Unitarianism that Henry Longfellow was nurtured at church and at home. And there is no reason to suppose that he ever found these insufficient, or that he ever essentially departed from them. Of his genuine religious feeling his writings give ample testimony. His nature was at heart devout; his ideas of life, of death, and of what lies beyond, were essentially cheerful, hopeful, optimistic. He did not care to talk much on theological points; but he believed in the supremacy of good in the world and in the universe.

In the home parlor the sister's piano had replaced the spinet of his mother's youth. The Battle of Prague, Governor Brooks's March, Washington's March, and other music of the period were familiar; to such songs as Henry's Cottage Maid, Brignal's Banks, Bonnie Doon, The Last Rose of Summer, Oft in the Stilly Night, Henry lent his voice and the training of the singing-school; while the lessons of the dancing-class were repeated in the parlor, to the tunes of Money Musk, The Haymakers, or Fisher's Hornpipe.

In the evenings, there were lessons to be learned; and the children opened their satchels, and gathered, with their books and slates, round the table in the family sitting-room. The silence would be broken for a moment by the long mysterious blast of a horn, announcing the arrival in town

of the evening mail, then the rattle of its passing wheels, and then silence again, save the singing of the wood-fire. Studies over, there would be games till bed-time. If these became too noisy, or the father had brought home his law-papers from the office, enjoining strictest quiet, then there was flight to another room, — perhaps, in winter, to the kitchen, where hung the crane over the coals in the broad old fireplace, upon whose iron back a fish forever baked in effigy. When bed-time came, it was hard to leave the warm fire to go up into the unwarmed bed-rooms; still harder next morning to get up out of the comfortable feather-beds and break the ice in the pitchers for washing. But hardship made hardihood. In summer it was pleasant enough to look out from the upper windows: those of the boys' room looked out over the Cove and the farms and woodlands toward Mount Washington, full in view on the western horizon; while the eastern chambers commanded a then unobstructed view of the bay. White Head, Fort Preble, and the light-house on Cape Elizabeth.

" Out of my childhood," wrote Mr. Longfellow in later years, "rises in my memory the recollection of many things rather as poetic impressions than as prosaic facts. Such are the damp mornings of early spring, with the loud crowing of cocks and the cooing of pigeons on roofs of barns. Very distinct in connection with these are the indefinite longings incident to childhood; feelings of wonder and loneliness which I could not interpret and scarcely then took cognizance of. But they have remained in my mind."

## **CHAPTER II. SCHOOL-DAYS. 1810-1821.**

The boy's school-life began at three years of age, when he went with his brother of five to a school kept by one Mrs. Fellows, — " Ma'am Fellows," she was called, — who taught

him his letters and respect for elders, if nothing more. He remembered being carried to school sometimes on horseback, in front of the colored man who worked for his father. At five years he was thought old enough to go to the public school in Love Lane, quite near his home. But the companionship of some of the rough boys was so very distasteful to him that he stayed only a week. It was, perhaps, from this school that he came home one day, his cheeks and his heart burning with anger; the schoolmaster had accused him of a lie. So he was removed to a private school kept by Mr. Wright, and afterward by Mr. N. H. Carter. And when, in 1813, Mr. Carter took charge of the Portland Academy, Henry followed him. And there we find him at the age of six. And one day he brings home this "billet": —

Master Henry Longfellow is one of the best boys we have in school. He spells and reads very well. He also can add and multiply numbers. His conduct last quarter was very correct and amiable.

N. H. Carter.

June 30, 1813.

The next spring he is reported as having "gone half through his Latin Grammar" and as standing "above several boys twice as old as he." By this time, as we have seen, he had written his first letter. In 1817, when he is ten years old, the new preceptor, Mr. Cushman, certifies that he "has during the week distinguished himself by his good deportment, — Monday morning's lesson and occasional levity excepted." These were pardonable derelictions. At other times he is reported as "very ambitious to do well;" and once comes the mysterious statement that he "is wise enough to listen to the advice of his best friends." At the

Academy he came also under the instructions of Mr. Jacob Abbot, and of Mr. Cobb and other assistants.

Of one of his teachers he in later years records this recollection: —

I remember the schoolmaster at the Academy, and the mingled odor that hovered about him of tobacco, india rubber, and lead pencil. A nervous, excitable man. When we left school I went with a schoolmate to take leave of him and thank him for his patience with us. He thought we were in jest; and gave me a stern lecture on good behavior and the trials of a teacher's life.

One of his schoolmates has given us this remembrance of the boy at the Academy: —

I recollect perfectly the impression made upon myself and others. He was a very handsome boy. Retiring, without being reserved, there was a frankness about him that won you at once. He looked you square in the face. His eyes were full of expression, and it seemed as though you could look down into them as into a clear spring.... He had no relish for rude sports; but loved to bathe in a little creek on the border of Deering's Oaks; and would tramp through the woods at times with a gun, but this was mostly through the influence of others; he loved much better to lie under a tree and read.... If he was a thoughtful, he certainly was not a melancholy, boy; and the minor key to which so much of his verse is attuned, and that tinge of sadness his countenance wore in later years, were due to that first great sorrow that came upon him, which was chiseled still deeper by subsequent trials.

The school-year was divided into "quarters" with a week's vacation at the end of each, which was extended perhaps,

in summer, to a fortnight. These holidays were often spent in visits to his grandfather Longfellow's house in Gorham, his father's birth-place, a few miles from Portland. The road was a rather dreary one, and passed a wood which the boy believed to be haunted. His grandfather was Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, and also carried on a farm. The homestead was a comfortable house of two stories, the road on either side of it shaded with long rows of slender elm-trees, which Henry's father when a boy had helped to plant. Under the windows grew syringe bushes and sweetbriers, and the dark-red "low damask" roses bloomed in their season. Across the way was a blacksmith's shop, where the farm horses were shod; and further along, a little brook crossed by a wooden bridge; and at a turn of the road, a one-story school-house of the forlorn pattern which was then in vogue. The village of Gorham — "Gorham Corner," it was called — was about three miles further on. Judge Longfellow, the grandfather, is described as "a fine-looking gentleman, with" the bearing of the old-school; an erect, portly figure, rather tall; wearing almost to the close of his life the old-style dress, — long-skirted waistcoat, small-clothes, and white-topped boots, his hair tied behind in a club, with black ribbon." The freedom and range of the farm were, of course, delightful to the town boy. His uncle and aunt Stephenson, in whose house he had been born, had removed to Gorham when Jefferson's embargo kept the ships "rotting at the wharves," and now carried on the adjoining farm. And there Henry had the companionship of his cousins and played a little at farming, — following the mowers at hay time, and going for the cows at evening in the pennyroyal-scented pastures; picking the wild strawberries; peeping into the dairy to see the cheese-presses, and the butter-making in the tall churns; in autumn entering into the work and fun of the corn-husking; watching the great spinning wheel while the spinner walked to and fro, as she fed the spindle from the heap of

carded wool; or even filling the quills when the household loom was in use weaving the homespun.

Sometimes the vacation journey was extended — a long day's drive — to Hiram, where his grandfather Wadsworth had built himself a house in the midst of his estate of seven thousand acres, called on the maps of the time "Wadsworth's Grant," between the Saco and the Ossipee rivers. His grandchildren looked with a kind of awe upon his upright form, in the cocked hat and buckled shoes which he continued to wear. As they sat in the spacious and breezy hall, they never tired of hearing him tell the thrilling story of his capture by British soldiers, his imprisonment in Fort George at Castine, and his adventurous escape. Perhaps he told the school-boy some stories of his college life at Harvard; or of the patriotic indignation with which, a recent graduate, he heard of the "servile reception," by the College, of the Royal Governor, Hutchinson, in 1771; perhaps, even, read the verses which he had written at the time, "On the Decay of Virtue and Increase of Politeness and Servility at Harvard College."

Not far from Hiram, in the neighboring town of Fryeburg, lies one of those small lakes of which the State of Maine is full, their clear waters rimmed with a beach of pale sand. It is called Lovewell's (or Lovell's) Pond, and is the scene of an event famous in New England history as "Lovewell's Fight" with the Indians. The story made a deep impression on the boy's imagination. One morning — the 17th of November, 1820 — there appeared in the poet's corner of the Portland Gazette the following verses: —

#### THE BATTLE OF LOVELUS POND.

Cold, cold is the north wind and rude is the blast  
That sweeps like a hurricane loudly and fast,

As it moans through the tall waving pines lone and drear,  
Sighs a requiem sad o'er the warrior's bier.

The war-whoop is still, and the savage's yell  
Has sunk into silence along the wild dell;  
The din of the battle, the tumult, is o'er  
And the war-clarion's voice is now heard no more.

The warriors that fought for their country — and bled,  
Have sunk to their rest; the damp earth is their bed;  
No stone tells the place where their ashes repose,  
Nor points out the spot from the graves of their foes.

They died in their glory, surrounded by fame,  
And Victory's loud trump their death did proclaim;  
They are dead; but they live in each Patriot's breast.  
And their names are engraven on honor's bright crest.

Henry,

There is very little, even of promise, in these verses. Other boys of thirteen have written better. Their only interest lies in their being, as far as is known, the first printed verses of our poet. But the boy's first printed verses were to him, at least, of vast interest. He recalled, in after years, the trembling and misgiving of heart with which he ran down to Mr. Shirley's printing-office at the foot of Exchange Street, and cautiously slipped his manuscript into the letter-box. The evening before the publication of the paper — it was a semiweekly — he went again, and stood shivering in the November air, casting many a glance at the windows, as they trembled with the jar of the inkballs and the press — afraid to venture in. No one but his sister, the receiver of all his confidences, had been let into his secret; and she shared with him the excited expectation with which the appearance of the paper was looked for, the next

morning. We may imagine the impatience with which they watched the unfolding of the damp sheet in their father's methodical hands, and the rising vapor as he held it before the wood-fire to dry. Slowly he read the paper, and said nothing — perhaps saw nothing — of the verses, and the children kept their secret. But when they could get the paper — the poem was there! Inexpressible was the boy's delight, and innumerable the times that he read and re-read his performance, each time with increasing satisfaction. In the evening he went to visit at the house of Judge Mellen, his father's friend, whose son Frederic was his own intimate. In the circle gathered about the fire, the talk turned upon poetry. The Judge took up the morning's Gazette: " Did you see the piece in today's paper? Very stiff, remarkably stiff; moreover, it is all borrowed, every word of it." The boy's heart shrunk within him and he would gladly have sunk through the floor. He got out of the house as soon as possible, without betraying himself. Shall we blame him that there were tears on his pillow that night? It was his first encounter with " the critic," from whom he was destined to hear much, not always complimentary, and of whom he had more than once something not very complimentary to say.

This first mishap, however, did not discourage him. He was not of a temperament easily discouraged. From time to time other pieces appeared in the Gazette, with the signature known to a few friends. They are not worth reprinting. With his friend William Browne, a bright youth a little older than himself, he established a literary interchange and, indeed, partnership. In his friend's letters, which alone are preserved, we get such hints as these: " I think your lines were excellent; " " As to your Epigram, which you pronounce so bad, I find no fault in it; " " I have done my best to proceed with our play; " "I hope you will send me the whole of your Tragedy, *in partibus*, i. e. by



inches; " " Concerning that thing you call a Comedy, I shall not send it you, *quia non habeo*; it is destroyed." In 1821 there comes a proposal for a series of papers to be written by the two alternately, for which " the less assuming name of The Spectator " is suggested.

Meanwhile neither studies, play, nor literary enterprises occupied all the time. In the New England of that day " co-education " was not discussed, but practiced without question. In the Portland Academy the girls and boys were duly placed apart on either side of the aisle that ran from the door to the teacher's platform; but these two sets of desks faced each other. Imagine the lessons that were learned above the grammar and the arithmetic, the romances which were composed but never submitted to the teachers for criticism! There is even a trustworthy tradition that some of the shy, or more ardent, boys cut peep-holes in the lids of their desks, to be furtively used in the prolonged intervals of putting away a slate or getting out a writing-book. Deering's Woods also afforded lovely opportunities in its leafy glades, which our school-boy frequented, not only, with his boy companions in search of autumnal acorns and walnuts, but with the pretty maidens, his sister's friends, when April winds stirred the blossoming of the rosy-white May-flowers under their blanket of rough leaves, — very good emblems of the innocent flames that hid their tender glow under the school-boy's jacket. Nor had Nature failed to provide a few beech-trees among the oaks, — her ready tablets for the school-boy's stylus" the penknife, in its practice of the alphabet. More elaborate records of these "early loves" and their romance may have found their way to the poets' corner of the newspaper. At any rate he did not forget them when in after years he recalled his Lost Youth.

I can see the breezy dome of groves,

The shadows of Deering's Woods;  
And the friendships old and the early loves  
Come back with a Sabbath sound, as of doves  
In quiet neighborhoods.

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart  
Across the school-boys brain;  
The song and the silence in the heart,  
That in part are prophecies, and in part  
Are longings wild and vain.

— My Lost Youth

### **CHAPTER III. COLLEGE YEARS. 1821-1824.**

In 1821 the school-boy becomes the collegian, passing successfully, in company with his brother two years older than himself, the entrance examinations for Bowdoin College. Of this college — then but twenty years in existence — his father, himself a graduate of Harvard, was one of the Trustees. Maine had, the year before, been separated from Massachusetts, and erected into an independent State; and there was all the new ardor of local pride in the State institutions. Perhaps on account of Henry's youth, — he was not yet fifteen, — the boys pursued their first year's studies at home; and did not go up for residence at the College till the autumn of 1822.

On going to Brunswick at the beginning of the Sophomore year, the brothers took a room together at the house of Rev. Mr. Titcomb in the village. It must have been very plainly furnished, for such was the custom of the time. Carpets even were then unknown in students' rooms. We hear of no adornments to theirs but some bombazine window-curtains, and a set of card-racks painted by their sister; and they

complain of difficulty in keeping their room warm in the bitter Northern winter, with their wood-fire in the open fireplace.

Of Henry Longfellow's college career we have glimpses in the recollections of one of his Professors and some of his fellow-collegians. Professor Packard writes of him as " an attractive youth, of well-bred manners and bearing," " of unblemished character as a pupil, and a true gentleman in all his relations with the college and its teachers."

His classmate, Bradbury, gives this picture of him: —

I met him for the first time in the autumn of 1822, when I entered, as Sophomore, the class of which he was a member. As we both had our rooms out of college and in the same vicinity, we were often together in passing to and from the recitation-room, and became well acquainted. He was genial, sociable, and agreeable, and always a gentleman in his deportment. He was uniformly cheerful. He had a happy temperament, free from envy and every corroding passion and vice. In personal appearance, according to my present recollection of him,... his figure was slight and erect, his complexion light and delicate as a maiden's, with a slight bloom upon the cheek; his nose rather prominent, his eyes clear and blue, and his well formed head covered with a profusion of brown hair waving loosely. While he was understood in college to be a general reader, and more especially devoted to the Muses, he never allowed himself to come to the recitation-room without thorough preparation. I have some knowledge that he found more difficulty in mastering the hard problems in the higher branches of mathematics than he did in any of his other studies. His class was one in which there was a large amount of ambition and an intense struggle for rank in scholarship.... Longfellow maintained a high rank in a class

which contained such names as Hawthorne, Little, Cilley, Cheever, Abbot, and others. In this class Longfellow stood justly among the first.... We had in our class the sons of Judge Bridge, Simon Greenleaf, Stephen Longfellow, Jeremiah Mason, Chief Justice Mellon, and Commodore Preble.

Another classmate speaks of him as "uniformly regular and studious in his habits, rather disinclined to general intercourse, maintaining high rank as a scholar, and distinguished especially for the excellence of his compositions." "Such was his temperament," he adds, "that it appeared easy for him to avoid the unworthy." A townsman and fellow-collegian writes: —

An intimacy commenced between us in his Junior year, as we were both of us Peucinians (there were two literary societies in the College, the Athenian and the Peucian ) and happened to board together in a little private club. After supper we sometimes took a stroll together in the Brunswick woods, and then adjourned to his room for a little chat and smoke. He never seemed to care for gun or rod, and as we wandered together through the woods he never expressed a wish to fire a shot at the flocks of wild pigeons, nor to take the fish of the Androscoggin, though I enjoyed both sorts of sport, and had sometimes for a companion his brother Stephen. Neither did Hawthorne care for field sport.

Lively as he was in disposition, both his instincts and his principles kept him from taking part in any college escapades or mischief. His books, his companions, — in whose choice he was, from instinct also, somewhat fastidious, though friendly toward all, — his rambles in the pines and along the river banks, well occupied the uneventful days. Of course, he kept up a correspondence

with his family, and especially with his father, who during two of these college years spent the winters in Washington, as member of the House of Representatives. These letters will give some idea of what he was doing and thinking in these years. And first we get a glance at his reading: —

To his Mother.

Bowdoin College, April — " 1823.

... I have this evening been reading a few pages in Gray's Odes. I am very much pleased with them. The 'Progress of Poesy' and the 'Ode on Eton College' are admirable. And many passages of 'The Bard,' though, I confess, quite obscure to me, seem to partake in a great degree of the sublime. Obscurity is the great objection which many urge against Gray. They do not consider that it contributes in the highest degree to sublimity; and he certainly aimed at sublimity in these Odes. Every one admires his Elegy, and if they do not his Odes, they must attribute it to their own want of taste.

To this letter his mother replied: —

I am not very conversant with the poetry of Gray, dear H., and therefore cannot tell whether I should be as much pleased with it in general as you are. His Elegy I have read frequently and always with pleasure; I admire it for its truth and simplicity. I presume you will not allow it any sublimity. Obscurity, you think, is favorable to the sublime. It may be so, but I am much better pleased with those pieces which touch the feelings and improve the heart than with those which excite the imagination only and raise perhaps an indistinct admiration, — that is, an admiration of we know not exactly what. I have been looking over some of our books, but have not yet found anything of

Gray's, not even in the Poetical Epitome; but I shall continue the search. In Johnson's Lives I find some account of him. He was "perhaps the most learned man in England." Of his poetry, his learned biographer does not seem to be much enamored. He wishes to know the meaning of the first line in the ' Progress of Poesy,' and speaks of that and ' The Bard ' as incomprehensible. But to the Elegy even Johnson was obliged to do justice: " Had Gray often written thus, it had been vain to blame, and useless to praise him."

In another letter she wrote: —

To return to our old subject, Gray's poems, — I wish you would bring the book home with you. I have a strong inclination to read the poems, since you commend them so highly. I think I should be pleased with them, though Dr. Johnson was not I do not think the Doctor possessed much sensibility to the charms of poetry, and he was sometimes most unmerciful in his criticisms.

The collegian also begged modestly to differ from the Doctor: —

To his Mother.

April 25, 1823.

The partial and uncandid manner in which Dr. Johnson criticised the poems of Gray, gives great offence to many, and is condemned by all of candid minds. The cause of his severity is generally believed to be the difference of their religious and political opinions. This is sufficient to make the opinions advanced by the great Lexicographer of little weight Though he were the greatest man alive, and possessed of the greatest learning, yet this, without he possessed also impartiality, would not constitute him the