

**A BOOK ABOUT
LONGFELLOW**

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A Book About Longfellow by J. N. McIlwraith

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J. N. MCILWRAITH

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LONGFELLOW**

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" A BOOK ABOUT
LONGFELLOW,

BY
Jean Newton
J. N. MILWRAITH
(“JEAN FORSYTH”)
Author of "A Book about Shakespeare"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS

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LONGFELLOW.

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE THE DAWN.

SLOW RISE OF AMERICAN LITERATURE—CAUSES—CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN POETS—PURITANISM—THEOLOGICIANS—POLITICIANS—PROVINCIALISM.

AMERICA was discovered in the fifteenth century; Virginia was colonized in the ^{seventeenth} ~~sixteenth~~; the Pilgrim Fathers set foot upon Plymouth Rock in the seventeenth; but America had no literature worthy of the name before the nineteenth century.

The early settlers were not barbarians. In crossing the Atlantic they did not descend to the level of the native races of that continent, nor could they plead the absence either of a worthy medium or of worthy models. They had not to struggle with a language in its transition stages, and could not com-

plain that it was necessary to coin words for the expression of their finer fancies.

Shakespeare had found the English language capable of interpreting the highest flights of imagination, as well as the profoundest reasoning of the human mind, and they had him for a model. There was Milton, too, an inspiration and an exemplar for those who frowned upon the theatre; while Dryden, Pope, and others of lesser note, kept up the steady-going stream of English literature into the eighteenth century, made memorable by Cowper and Burns.

During the hundred and fifty years that America was dumb, or mumbled inarticulately in tones drowned within a mile of her own shores, there were many cultivated voices sounding loud and clear in almost every country of Europe.

The poetical and dramatic influence of Lope de Vega departed not from Spain with the middle of the seventeenth century, and Calderon sustained the music till its close. The immortal French dramatists, Corneille, Molière, Racine, evidenced the form of literature in which the national genius chose to declare itself in their time; while later on, Diderot and D'Alembert, in advertising their "Encyclopédie," could exhibit a list of contributors that included the