THE RIVERSIDE LITERATURE SERIES. HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW: A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE

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HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW & CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

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Trieste

H. W. Longfellow

The Riverside Literature Series

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE

BY

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

TOGETHER WITH LONGFELLOW'S CHIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEMS

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NOTE

The commemoration, under the auspices of the Cambridge Historical Society, on the 27th of February, 1907, *of the one hundredth anniversary of Longfellow's birthday, accounts for the character of this little volume. Besides the sketch of the life of the Poet, it contains most of those of his shorter poems which are referred to in the narrative, and also those which have a distinctly autobiographical character, and those which relate to his special friends and to the places of his birth and abode. Thus, the little book gives the story of the Poet's life briefly narrated in prose by a friend, and partially recorded in verse by himself.*

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NOTE

The frontispiece portrait of Longfellow in 1842 is from the original painting by G. P. A. Healy in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The autograph, from a letter dated 1840, is in the Charles Folsom Collection, Boston Public Library. The portrait which faces page 42 is from a photograph taken in 1879. The autograph is from a letter dated 1880.

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

At the beginning of the nineteenth century New England was a good land in which to be born. It was still sparsely settled. There were no large towns. Boston, the largest, had scarcely twenty-five thousand inhabitants. The people were homogeneous, of unmixed English stock. They were mainly farmers or seamen. They were intelligent, industrious, and religious. There was great equality of condition, none were very rich, none very poor. Everybody was well off, for the poorest were free from the fear of oppression or starvation. The relations between man and man were natural and friendly. The general habits of life were simple and frugal; but even in the smaller towns there were often a few families which maintained a traditional comparatively high standard of refinement, of intellectual culture, and of moderate though genuine elegance.

There was never a more truly democratic community, nor one in which the advantages