

ONE HUNDRED BEST AMERICAN POEMS

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One Hundred Best American Poems by John R. Howard

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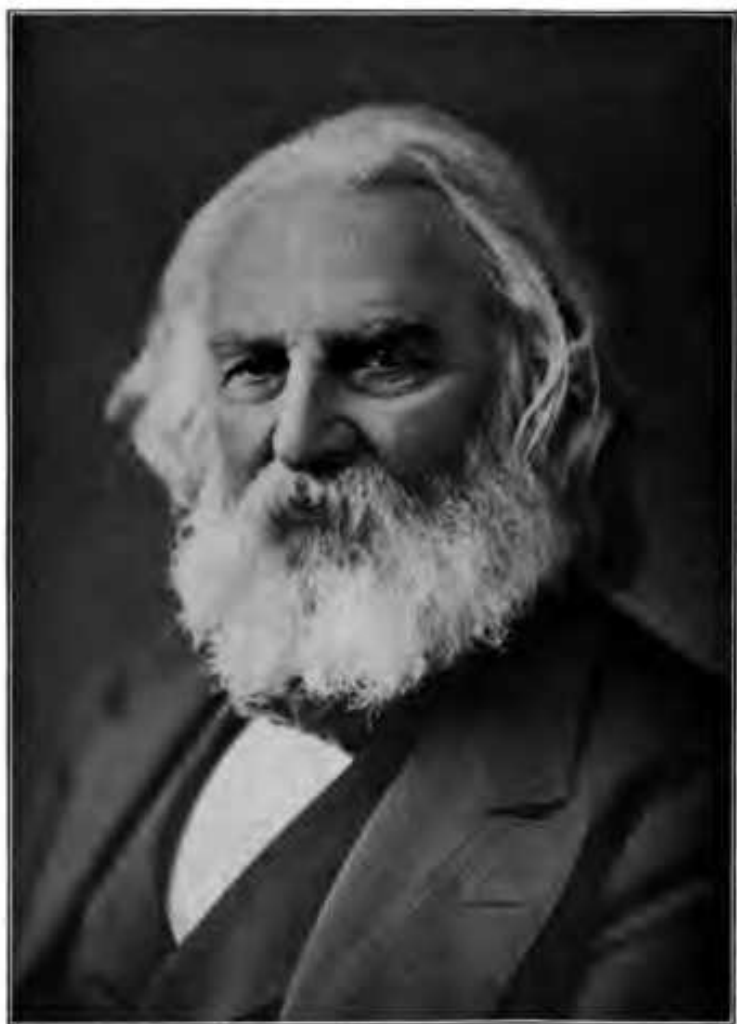
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JOHN R. HOWARD

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AMERICAN POEMS**



Henry W. Longfellow

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NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL
COMPANY

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ONE HUNDRED BEST
AMERICAN POEMS

SELECTED BY

JOHN R. HOWARD

MANAGING EDITOR OF THE LIBRARY OF "THE
WORLD'S BEST POETRY"

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PREFACE

THIS grouping of American poems had its rise in the welcome accorded to a little volume entitled "The Hundred Best English Poems," issued by the same publishers. To select one hundred examples from the best work by our American poets, excluding all living authors, and avoiding an undue proportion of pieces by the few acknowledged to be preëminent, has been a puzzling although a pleasant task. Of course, no two editors would select the same hundred pieces from the sixty-four poets here represented. Any one familiar with our poetical literature will miss here certain favorites, and perhaps would criticize some of the selections. This is inevitable.

It is not always the most finished art which expresses feelings and "thoughts that shall live within the general mind." Many a simple poem has touched the popular heart by virtue of some genuine emotion or idea, melodiously if not artistically versified; and some of these will be found herein, because they have out-

lived their makers on the earth, and are still cherished for the pleasure, the consolation, or the spiritual uplift they afford. Yet, it may be added, there is hardly a piece in this little anthology that is not found in one or more of the larger collections made by critics of recognized taste,—such as Dana, Bryant, Stedman, and Warner. Thus a certain authoritative vote has been secured, which may give confidence in the result.

It is not claimed that these are The Hundred Best, but One Hundred from among the Best productions of our American poetical writers who have passed away. We begin with Philip Freneau (1752-1832), the pioneer among our American poets; and the list closes with the charming young writer, Richard Hovey, who died, too soon for his high promise, in 1900. The arrangement of the authors is in chronological order,—as nearly as that can be attained,—so that contrasts of style, changing with the times, may not be so discordantly apparent as is often observed with an alphabetical arrangement; but the index of authors, with titles of their poems, enables the reader easily to find any desired writer, and the index of first lines completes the simple finding-lists.

Some of the pieces of the later poets, being under copyright control, are printed here by the courteous consent of the owners; and thanks are rendered to the following houses and persons for permission to use poems by the authors named: Messrs. Little, Brown, & Co. for Emily Dickinson and Helen Hunt Jackson; The Lothrop Publishing Co. for Paul Hamilton Hayne; Messrs. Henry T. Coates & Co. for Mrs. Ethelinda E. Beers; the Neale Publishing Co. and Mrs. Mary M. B. Whitman for Henry Ames Blood; the J. B. Lippincott Co. for George H. Boker and Thomas Buchanan Read; Brentano's for John Henry Boner; the Robert Clarke Co. for General William Haines Lytle; Mr. P. J. Kenedy for Father Abram J. Ryan; and Messrs. Small, Maynard, & Co. for Walt Whitman and Richard Hovey. The poems thus permitted add much to the variety and the representative worth of the collection, and, it may be trusted, will induce readers to find fuller enjoyment in the volumes issued by those publishers, containing all the poems by the authors of whose work brief examples only are here given.
