

friends and acquaintances by my announcement, apparently in quite a casual sort of way, that I had been invited to dine at Thackeray's house. I am afraid I sometimes added, with an affectation of composure, as if I were speaking of quite an ordinary event in one's life, that it was to be a small dinner party confined to a few literary men, and that I expected to hear some pleasant talk about literature. The time was drawing close to the Christmas of 1863. I used to go down to the newspaper office in the city every afternoon, and one afternoon, not easily to be forgotten by me in this world, I learned in the city the terrible news of Thackeray's sudden death. That was a darksome Christmas time for me. Thackeray was, as he is still, one of my great literary heroes; and now, just at the moment when the possibility seemed to open on me of being admitted to his friendship, the chance was gone forever. I should have mourned even if I had never met him face to face; but to have met him, to have been invited to his house, and then to find all possibility of his friendship suddenly cut off from me, was enough to make me think for the time more of my own personal loss than of the loss which the world of letters had sustained."

Of Meredith he says:

"I think the first impression which George Meredith made on me was that of extraordinary and exuberant vitality. When I saw him for the first time he had left his younger days a long way behind him, and yet he had the appearance and the movements of one endowed with a youth that could not fade; energy was in every movement; vital power spoke in every gesture. He loved bodily exercises of all kinds; he delighted to take long, brisk walks—'spins' as he called them—along the highways and the byways of the neighborhood, and he loved to wander through the woods, and to lie in the grass, and I have no doubt he would have enjoyed climbing the trees. He seemed to have in him much of the temperament of the fawn; he seemed to have sprung from the very bosom of Nature herself. His talk was wonderful, and perhaps, not the least wonderful thing about it was that it seemed so very like his writing. Now it was Richard Feverel who talked to you, and now Harley Adrian, and then Beauchamp—not that he ever repeated any of the recorded sayings of these men, but that he talked as one could imagine any of them capable of talking on any suggested subject."

He was a great admirer of James Russell Lowell:

"I had many opportunities of meeting Lowell during my early visits to Boston, and afterward when he came to London merely as a traveler; and

still later when he was settled in London for some time as American minister here. I admired him always; but I may be forgiven if I say that I admired him most in his own home, and amid his own familiar surroundings at Cambridge, Mass. It seemed to me that I understood him best under such conditions, perhaps because I had for so many years come to associate him with the poets and scholars and essayists, the workers and the dreamers who made that corner of the United States so dear and so fascinating to admirers in the old country. Lowell was, as everybody knows, one of the most popular American ministers who ever came to London. London society thoroughly appreciated him and welcomed him, 'went for' him with homage and rapture, did all it could to spoil him with praise and social flattery, but could not prevent him from being the poetical, fanciful, dreamy Lowell of the college halls, and the homes, and the lanes of Cambridge. Indeed, Lowell developed in London a gift of which, so far as I know, he had not given any clear evidence at home. He became one of the most delightful and fascinating after-dinner speakers I have ever heard. I rank him second, and only second, to Charles Dickens as an after-dinner speaker. He never said anything which was not fresh, original, and striking; he made the most commonplace theme sparkle with fancy and humor, with exquisite phrase and poetic suggestiveness. I think the famous old illustration about the orator receiving in a vapor from his audience that which he gives back as a flood, would have applied admirably to Lowell, for it seemed to me that the manifest delight of his London audiences had the effect of making him a great after-dinner speaker as he went along. Yet I cannot help saying again that I liked him best as I knew him first; that the Lowell of Cambridge, Mass., was more to me the real Lowell, the poet and the critic, the moralist, the thinker, and the dreamer, than the Lowell of London society, the Lowell of London public dinners, and fashionable dinner parties, and fashionable drawing rooms."

McCarthy had many meetings with Longfellow during the time of his first stay in America, and the general impression he derived from his intercourse with him was that the man, on the whole, was greater than his books:

"Now, I am not sure that I can very clearly describe what I should wish to convey, and what is in my own mind upon this subject, I am old-fashioned enough to be still an admirer of Longfellow's poetry, and of 'Hyperion,' and of 'Ouvre-Mer.' I am told that this is not the right sort of thing to say at the present moment; and I believe that to the immense popularity which Longfellow once enjoyed in England there

has succeeded the familiar period of reaction, and that it is now thought the thing to cry him down as it was once thought the thing to cry him up. I do not, however, profess to be particularly bound by the laws of fashion in poetry, and I hold to it that Longfellow was, in his way and within his limits, a genuine poet. A stream is a stream though its flow be not broad or deep; and Longfellow's was a genuine stream of song. But what I desire to convey is that, if I had met Longfellow personally before I had read his poems and his prose books, and had had a chance of talking to him such as I did actually enjoy at various times, about Nature, and scenery, and books, and the impulses, thoughts, and deeds that inspire books, and about the life and the heart of man, I should have expected to find in his printed works the stamp of a literary order higher than that to which, according to my judgment, the author attained."

Nothing could be more admirable than McCarthy's pen-picture of Holmes:

"I can well remember when and how it was first borne in upon me that Oliver Wendell Holmes was really growing to be an old man. It was during the last visit that I ever paid to Boston, some ten or twelve years ago. Up to that time I had always regarded Holmes as a sort of walking, moving immortality; a being endowed with eternal youth; a being at all events who could never grow old. I had come to regard him much as we all of late years had come to regard Mr. Gladstone. One day, however, I was walking near the Boston postoffice, when I heard a rapid footfall behind me. There was something in the sound of that footfall which filled me with an inexplicable and a melancholy interest. It was the sound of an uncertain tread; it might have been the tread of a child only beginning to walk, or it might have been the tread of some very old person. Then I heard a voice calling my name, and I turned round, and there was Wendell Holmes."

He adds:

"I went with my daughter to pay him a visit, and he took us about Boston to show us some curious old book shops and print shops, which he loved to haunt. We had to go in various omnibuses and tramcars, and I was much amused and touched by the gallantry and the alertness of the polite old cavalier. He would persist in handing my daughter in and out of every omnibus or tramcar made use of by us in our journeyings; he used to leap in and out with the agility of a young man and gave his courtly hand to my daughter as though he were some stalwart cavalier coming to the aid of weak girlhood. My daughter was a healthy and robust girl, who, one might have thought, was better fitted to help the old man; but Oliver Wendell Holmes never failed to lead the way for