

## NOTES FROM THE LIBRARY

### MRS. CLEMENS APOLOGIZES FOR HER HUSBAND

MARK TWAIN's very individual deportment, compounded of unconventionality and absentmindedness, was a frequent source of distress to his devoted but much-tried wife, as Albert Bigelow Paine has made sufficiently evident in his voluminous biography of the great humorist. Among the manuscripts in the Stanton Memorial Collection at New Jersey College for Women is the following letter from Mrs. Clemens to Theodore Stanton, which gives further proof that "Livy's" rigorous sense of social correctness sometimes suffered violence at the hands of her unpredictable husband.

Riverdale on the Hudson  
Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> 1901

Dear Mr Stanton:

I was more shocked than I can tell you when I came back from town yesterday and found that you had been here from eleven o'clock until two or thereabouts and had had no luncheon. We seem like that kind of people but really we are not.

Mr Clemens exclaimed at dinner "There! I asked Mr Stanton to come out here and said that although we had no cook we would give him *something* to eat in case he staid until luncheon or until tea time."

I said "and yet you let him go back without anything to eat?" His excuse was that he never thought of it.

The facts in the case are that my daughters and I were all away and Mr Clemens never takes luncheon, and he never can believe that people want anything to eat between nine in the morning & seven at night. I have lived with him more than thirty years. I always take luncheon at one & tea at four to five, but he never gets used to it. When we are traveling together & I begin to feel about one o'clock the demands of hunger he almost invariably says "You want to eat again!"

He also offers in excuse that he was so greatly interested in what you & he were talking that he could not be expected to think of anything else.

Will you forgive us?

Believe me

Sincerely yours

Olivia L. Clemens

O.S.C.

### "WORDS BY LONGFELLOW"

"WORDS BY LONGFELLOW" is the proudly displayed (and misspelled) announcement on the cover of a piece of nineteenth-century sheet music, one of a group of songs set to Longfellow's poetry which belong in the Rutgers Library collection of Americana—or, perhaps, *curiosa Americana*. Eight pieces in all, the music was published between 1847 and 1875 and bears on its title pages the names of some popular composers of the period—Ethelbert Nevin, Michael William Balfe, William R. Demp-

ster, J. Edgar Gould, Hodges, and Lemmens. These musicians, ranging from writers of opera to hymnodists, found inspiration in such poems of Longfellow as "The Rainy Day," "Resignation," "The Day is Done," and "Stars of the Summer Night" for vocal and instrumental music of the sentimental, inspirational type. On the cover of the sheet music for "Resignation" in the elaborately ornate typescript of the time appear the opening lines of the poem:

There is no flock, however watched  
and tended,  
But one dead lamb is there . . .

beneath which in flourishes and furbelows: "a song, with or without the Aeolian piano, words written by H. W. Longfellow." This must have sold well in those days, however much we may smile with twentieth-century sophistication at the sentiments.

The fact that Longfellow, perhaps more than most of his contemporaries including Poe, inspired popular composers to give his words musical settings is not surprising.<sup>1</sup> The note of serious feeling, touched gently with religious or philosophic elevation, suited perfectly the mood of a period described by a recent writer as "the feminine fifties." "The Skeleton in Armor" and especially "Hiawatha" received various musical renderings, as did "The Wreck of the Hesperus," though Arthur Foote, who did all three, complained that the monotony

of the versification in certain places was an impediment to the composer.

Nevertheless, the composers of these songs succeeded on the whole admirably in adapting music to the poems. William R. Dempster, a Scotsman and composer of music for Tennyson, adapted "The Rainy Day" of Longfellow with its mood of subdued resignation by the appropriate use of a minor key—A minor. By a clever shift to a major key in the closing phrase, he caught the sense of completeness and repose in the final lines of the poem: "Into each life some rain must fall/ Some days must be dark and dreary." Ethelbert Nevin's musical setting of Longfellow's "Stars of the Summer Night" is melodious and even beautiful in its minor key. It has a lyrical sweetness characteristic of Nevin and seems to enhance the mood of peaceful calm in the closing words: "she sleeps, my lady sleeps . . . sleeps."

Michael William Balfe, a noted Irish composer known best for his "The Bohemian Girl," is represented twice in the Longfellow collection. He adapted "The Day is Done" and "Good Night, Good Night Beloved." In the first song his melodic pattern moves easily with the moods of the verse which, one recalls, pleads for

<sup>1</sup> W. Hastings, "Longfellow's Influence on Musical Composition," *Etude*, LV, no. 7 (July, 1937), p. 433, states: "By actual count more of Longfellow's works than those of any other American author have been used musically; and it is fitting . . . because he was himself greatly interested in music."

“some simple and heartfelt lay”—“not from the grand old masters, not from the bards sublime” (here there is a rising passage, a tingle of the heroic) and concludes with a sigh, “Tonight I long for rest” (the music has an octave-long dying fall in the final passage). Balfe’s musical version of “Good Night, Good Night Beloved” is equally successful in a livelier tempo, 6/8 time, *allegretto moderato*. The work begins *fortissimo* and moves along with considerable variety to the end, where a tremulo effect is followed by five strong chords in a speeded tempo. The piece suggests Balfe’s more famous “I Dream’t I Dwelt in Marble Halls” in its color and variety of tempo.

Other songs in the group aren’t quite so successful. The setting to “Resignation” by an American hymn writer, J. Edgar Gould, seems a little too fluent for the seriousness of the subject. Written “with tender expression” in place of a regular tempo indication, the piece is easy-flowing and tuneful, but gives too much the effect of a revival hymn. The last two pieces include a setting for the poet’s over-prettified treatment of a religious theme, “The Legend of the Crossbill”

—music by Le Chevalier Lemmens; and a lugubrious trio by Faustina Hodges, an American organist, for the German poet Klopstock’s “The Holy Dead,” translated by Longfellow. The music for the former is conventional and undistinguished, as is the poem; the latter, more complex, has a softness of volume and a weird, mysterious effect suggestive of morbidity and the grave. Written for three voices with piano accompaniment, the movement is slow and repetitive, and the *arpeggios* in the accompaniment express the religious or hymnal quality of the poem in shimmering chords.

R. E. AMACHER

R. P. FALK

#### VIRGINIA S. BURNETT

THE Library suffered a grievous loss in the death on August 22 of Virginia S. Burnett, Curator of Special Collections. Many of the Friends of the Library will remember her with affection and gratitude for the aid that she rendered them in their research.

She was an authority on early newspapers and almanacs, and was a contributor to the *Journal*.