

Across the hall from the parlor is the family sitting-room, once the law office of the poet's father. It has now the attractive look of a living room, so much of the old furnishing remains, and, indeed, one of the greatest charms about the place is the fact that every piece of furniture, with the one exception of the old piano now in the parlor, has been used by the Wadsworth and Longfellow families; the pictures upon the walls and the little articles of ornamentation were all family possessions. In this room is still the big open fireplace, with its andirons, and the ghost of firelight long passed seems to flash for a moment before us, as in fancy we see a young man looking into the dancing flames with thoughts in his mind which he will one day give expression to in the lines:

"By the fireside there are youthful dream-
ers,
Building castles fair, with stately stair-
ways,
Asking blindly
Of the Future what it cannot give them."

In an alcove stands the oldest piece of Longfellow furniture to be found in the house, a sort of buffet and desk combined, while the upper part was an addition made by Stephen Longfellow to contain his library. The wall paper is a reproduction of that formerly upon the walls, being made expressly for this room, while the carpet is the same which was upon the floor at the time of the poet's last visit to his old home. This was in July, 1881, at which time, writing to a friend, he says:

"Portland has lost none of its charms. It is very pleasant sitting here and dictating letters. It is like thinking what one will say, without taking the trouble of writing it. I have discovered a new pleasure."

By his favorite window still stands the poet's chair; a little away is that of his father, and between the windows the sewing table that was his mother's; while the gilt-framed mirror above, with its quaint picture in the upper half and row of tiny gilt balls, dates back to the days of his grandmother Wadsworth. Near by stands the table upon which the children studied their lessons during the winter evenings. Was it upon this, we wonder, that the thirteen-year-old Longfellow wrote his first published verses? These were "The Battle of Lovell's Pond," the story of which had made a strong impression upon his boyish mind. Only his sister Elizabeth was let into the secret of their writing, and she alone knew that he had carried them to the office of the *Portland Gazette* and dropped them in the box outside. Together the brother and sister waited the appearance of the next issue of the paper, and when it came, containing the verses, shared their satisfaction and enjoyed the remarks occasioned and the conjectures as to authorship; but, alas; their hearts sank in unison when a friend of the family pronounced the poem as "very stiff, remarkably stiff; moreover, it is borrowed, every word of it!"

In picturing the boy whose home was in the house, it is pleasant to have the fancy, aided by descriptions, which have been given by friends and members of the family. The earliest mention we find of him is in a letter written by his mother in October, 1807, in which she says:

"I think you would like my little Henry W. He is an active rogue, and wishes for nothing so much as singing and dancing."

When a boy of nine or ten, he is

thus spoken of by a friend of the family some years later:

"Most distinctly do I recall the bright, pleasant boy as I often saw him at his father's house while I was living in Portland, in the years 1816-17. My recollections of those interviews in that time-honored mansion, and of the excellent man whose reception of me was ever cordial, and whose conversation was to me so agreeable and so instructive, have never ceased to be a pleasure."

Others speak of him as "a lively boy, with brown or chestnut hair, blue eyes, a delicate complexion and rosy cheeks; sensitive, impressionable; active, eager, impetuous, often impatient; quick-tempered, but as quickly appeased; kind-hearted and affectionate,—the sunlight of the house."

Just across the corner from the poet's favorite window a doorway leads into a small room, an addition to the main part of the house, built on by Stephen Longfellow for his law office, and to give another entrance from outdoors. This has now the appearance of a pantry, with its shelves and cupboards, to which use it was given over some years later. The one window here looks out upon the old garden, and by it the youthful poet loved to sit during his writing. In a letter which he wrote to his sister Elizabeth in 1827, during his first visit abroad, he says:

"My poetic career is finished. Since I left America I have hardly put two lines together * * * and no soft poetic ray has irradiated my heart since the Goths and Vandals crossed the Rubicon of the front entry, and turned the sanctum sanctorum of the 'Little Room' into a china closet. * * * The muse being in the penitentiary, I can write no epithalamium,

but I can send you a volume of good wishes which I think much better."

The good wishes referred to were in the way of congratulations upon his sister's engagement, but the marriage was never realized, as the young girl died before its consummation.

A steep stairway leads from the kitchen to the upper rooms, and at the head of this, we are told by one who was there, the children of the family used to sit on Thanksgiving morning inhaling the delightful odors rising to them from the room below, and which a little later would materialize for them in the dining-room across the hallway from the kitchen. On one of the doors of this room is a quotation from the Rev. Samuel Longfellow's memories of Thanksgiving:

"At dinner were gathered at the old home children and grandchildren, and all the boys and girls were allowed to have as much turkey and as many pieces of mince pie and pumpkin pie, and as many nuts and raisins as they could hold. In the evening they played blind man's buff."

The dining-room was originally the sleeping room of Gen. Wadsworth, and the time came when it was known as the "den" and "Henry's room." The walls are still decorated with paper brought from Paris by a member of the family between fifty and sixty years ago. The chief interest, however, centers in the fact that upon the ancient mahogany desk which still stands between two windows looking out upon the old garden, "The Rainy Day" was written. Glancing out we may see that the "vine still clings to the mouldering wall," as at the time the poem was written in 1841, and in June—it is a flowering grape—it is covered with a profusion of blossoms.