The Whittier Birthday Speech

Mr. Whittier was a simple man, and I think he would have been horrified to learn that his birthday has been moved from its traditional date of December 7th to December 21st. He was a man of few words, and it is fitting that his birthday should be celebrated in a quiet, reflective manner.

I remember the first time I met him. It was at a small gathering of friends and family, and he was seated in the corner, lost in thought. I approached him and introduced myself, and to my surprise, he greeted me warmly.

Over the years, I have come to admire Mr. Whittier's poetry and his dedication to his craft. He was a man of great integrity, and his work continues to inspire me today.

On this, his birthday, let us celebrate the life and legacy of Mr. Whittier, a man who lived by his words and actions.
Mr. Longfellow was built like a prize fighter. His head was cropped and bristly, like as if he had a wig made of hairbrushes. His nose lay straight down his face, like a finger with the end joint tilted up. They had been drinking; I could see that. And what queer talk they used! Mr. Holmes inspected this cabin, then he took me by the buttonhole and, says he—

"Through the deep caves of thought
I hear a voice that sings,
Build thee more stately mansions,
O my soul!"

Says I, "I can't afford it, Mr. Holmes, and moreover I don't want to." Blamed if I liked it pretty well, either, coming from a stranger, that way. However, I started to get out my bacon and beans, when Mr. Emerson came and looked on awhile, and then he takes me aside by the buttonhole and says—

"Give me agates for my meat;
Give me cantharids to eat;
From air and ocean bring me foods,
From all zones and altitudes."

Says I, "Mr. Emerson, if you'll excuse me, this ain't no hotel." You see it sort of riled me—I war'n't used to the ways of litty swells. But I went on a-sweating over my work, and next comes Mr. Longfellow, and he buttonholes me, and interrupts me. Says he,

"Honor be to the Mudjekeewis!
You shall hear how Pau-Puk-Keewis—"

But I broke in, and says I, "Begging your pardon, Mr. Longfellow, if you'll be so kind as to hold your yawn for about five minutes and let me get this grub ready, you'll do me proud." Well, sir, after they'd filled up I set out the jug. Mr. Holmes looks at it and then he fires up all of a sudden and yells—

"Flash out a stream of blood-red wine!
For I would drink to other days."

By George, I was getting kind of worked up. I don't deny it, I was getting kind of worked up. I turns to Mr. Holmes, and says I, "Looky here, my fat friend, I'm a-running this shanty, and if the court knows herself you'll take whiskey straight or you'll go dry." Them's the very words I said to him. Now I didn't want to sass such famous litty people, but you see they kind of forced me. There ain't nothing unreasonable 'bout me; I don't mind a passel of guests a-tread'n on my tail three or four times, but when it comes to standing on it it's different, and if the court knows herself you'll take whiskey straight or you'll go dry. Well, between drinks they'd swell around the cabin and strike attitudes and spout. Says Mr. Longfellow:

"This is the forest primeval."

Says Mr. Emerson:

"Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world."

Says I, "O, blackguard the premises as much as you want to—it don't cost a cent." Well, they went on drinking, and pretty soon they got out a greasy old deck and went to playing cutthroat euchre at ten cents a corner—on trust. I begun to notice some pretty suspicious things. Mr. Emerson dealt, looked at his hand, shook his head, says—

"I am the doubter and the doubt—"

and calmly bunched the hands and went to shuffling for a new lay out. Says he—

"They reckon ill who leave me out;
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep. I pass and deal again!"

Hang'd if he didn't go ahead and do it, toot! O, he was a cool one! Well, in about a minute, things were running pretty tight, but all of a sudden I see by Mr. Emerson's eye that he judged he had 'em. He had already corralled two tricks and each of the others one. So now he kind of lifts a little in his chair, and says—

"I tire of globe and aces—
Too long the game is played!"

—and down he fetched a right bower. Mr. Longfellow smiles as sweet as pie and says—

"Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught";

—and dog my cats if he didn't down with another right bower! Well, sir, up jumps Holmes, a-war-whooping as usual, and says—

"God help them if the tempest swings
The pine against the palm!"
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1872

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perspective that on occasion like this, he had some more company, and Mr. Emerson pointed out the

brown, "The Truth is, life is a fight. "Then Mayor Crof.."

"They are playing it, and they are trying to figure it out.

He never went to the trouble of telling me what was going on in Boston, but he didn't speak.

"And I wish I may go to grass if he didn't sweep down with

Mark Twain in His Prime

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