"John Greenleaf Whittier
His Character
and
His Works"

By
Armstrong Hanson
John Greenleaf Whittier.

After studying the life and the surroundings of the Middlesex poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, I find that from his first verse to his last he is a man of the people and very staunch, Massachusetts people.

He dearly loved his country, and to him no orange grotto of sorrows could be sweeter than the beautiful pine grove of Pemmick Hill. No merlot Cashmere could ever hold to him half the wonderful beauty of Gloucester Noode.

He was envied power and glory. His life of toiling with pleasure of fishing, driving his whip-poor-will and squirrel, and more visits to his home than all the glory attached to a crown.

He felt deeply on the cruelties of his faith, yet can we judge another who have thoroughly the New Englander's character. Has brooked upon his superstitions and folly with such forbearance as our loving poet Whittier?

Precise note in his details of the traits, character, habits and details of the New England history, and still retain Whittier's
poem, we should indeed, loose nothing of
that life, so clearly and minutely had he
described it all in his poem.

In his beautiful poem he brings back
vividly to our minds the story of the
Maryflower as she glided in Plymouth Bay
with her frozen sails “Watched by winter stars”
“And whisked by winter gales.”

In 1647 Whittier wrote from Newbury
to Haverhill and brought there the first tin
of ice. He wrote quite a long poem about
these very trees, who thrived fervently in that
place, and filled the summer mornings with
their merry song.

The poem is excellent. It not only contains
the tribal hymn of these busy little fellows
but it contains deep thought and hatred of oppression, justice for the weak and their
kindsly wronged.

The first century had not yet reached
its close when the fierce and cruel
fiercely mind, returned night after night
with the bloody scalp of the innocent
white man and his family, hidden in his
feet, beneath the dirty blankets. With
such surroundings; with nature, on the
the other hand pure, beautiful and loving;  
with the life of a farmer boy, with an un-  
limited number of circumstances of his  
own; with an unshaken religious faith.  
Could there have been produced another  
such pair as Whittier? He was born and  
bred in toil, and was in sympathy with  
his fellow toilers. He despised not the man  
who must work for his daily bread, but  
rather honored him for being able to cope  
with the difficulties of this life and yet  
be able to say "I earn my bread, I am a toiler."

In the legends of his "Nogg Megone" he  
tells us of the Duellako whose master he  
makes as musical as Homer's Idyll.

He was a great observer, and the occupa-  
tions of the early French, whose mission  
are so extensive, does not escape without  
part. During all this, he finds poetry in  
the much discussed witchcraft and  
all the other superstitions of his time.

One would suppose this to be quite  
to carry a long face, how nothing in his  
mind but the solemnity of occasions, but  
not so with John Whittier; he is always  
withalful and jolly, and tells of sleighs.
and huckster parties, apple pears and apples, and all the customs of his country are told in jolly rhythm.

The life which he so beautifully described was not an easy one, nor were the surroundings luxurious, yet Whittier never feared, and by his loving praise we see beauty which otherwise would have remained unnoticed. He loved Old New England, and has touched us with the loyalty and praise of his civilization.

He sighs the praises of those old New England days with sympathy, and it makes us wonder at the soul he served. He believed that our land would prosper better by the freeman's vote.

He was one of the foremost of political leaders, and often edited various periodicals and journals. His writings were not all in poetry, for he also wrote a narrative that filled us with humor and color. He was an ardent admirer of the Caleb Cushing and Robert Rantoul.

Whittier's poems are full of the life of eternity, burning in fiery eloquence.
and nothing can equal this outcry but the
two or three which they were written.
The time in which this part wrote was
one of slavoiry and massacre, war and
vindication, and we must not think that
while he condemned them, he had any
personal charge against them. He has
the power of breaking sympathy and
remonstrance from the heart and soul of his
enemies.

His poems are full of the slavery move-
ment. He wrote such poems as "Barbara
Fritchie," "Methedial of Chins," and he calls
to us the time when the slave shall be
no more in bondage.

This has partially been reached, but Fritchie's
poems carry a truth which will some day
come to pass. He has written a great deal
on this subject, but it is not the only
topic for his thought. He looks at the
beauty of things as well as at the hard
side and by these visions he sets forth
poems such as "Wound Muller," simple
and sweet with perfect description.

Next comes "Snow-bound," a
perfect idyl. As I just said, his range
of topics was not limited. He hailed the abolition of Egyptian and Brazilian slavery. His poems are essentially lyric and Thoreau is full of music.

His poems are purely American, and we love him for it. Who do not love the man whose tongue and pen extol sing praises of America? We may say it is not alone in his praises of our beloved Columbia and Jackson, but, but take Bryant, Emerson, or Longfellow can we not apply their praises to other lands?

When you think of Thoreau we think of him as purely American. Take the simple "Barstow Bay," How true and beautiful! When one reads this poem, one sees and can not help seeing, the bay with uncovered feet, hand in his pockets, hat on the ear, trousers rolled to the knee, sauntering leisurely down the path, whistling a "Happy "tis possible "Bitter Than Cold."

Is there, in our language or any other, such another golden, soft and sweet as "Snow Bound"? It is so minutely describes New England that any one
of that descent reads it with sympathy and
veneration and fondness our Lead Sake Old. It is a
perfect description of the time, the life and
civilization from the habits and
customs, down to the minutest details.
The Laverhill home was left when our
beloved poet was about thirty years old. He
moved to Amesbury, a many acturing
town when there boasted of mills of both
steam and water power. To Amesbury he
took his mother and his sister Elizabeth.
Here they stayed till death called them home.
Their house was a one story cottage, but it
was afterward remodeled. It was a frame
house painted cream color and furnished
with white. It stands about two or three
rods back from the street. The Garden
Room is one of the most pleasant rooms,
furnished with a beautiful view to Powon
Hill.
This was Whittier's own room, and his
favorite room. He had his bed-room directly
above this. John G. Whittier, as loving was
a very peculiar man. In his youth he
was never romantic, at least no record
can be found to substantiate he was such.
In "Benedicite" he writes a few lines, but at any rate he never married.

He loved his sister Elizabeh very dearly, and with the exception of Charles and Mary his other relations were kind brothers and sisters and all attached and loving. Whittier never wrote nor composed verses on the theme of the moment, but he loves all kinds of innocent efforts.

Whittier kept his age very well. There must people begin to get old when they lose their bright twinkle in their eye, when their step becomes slower, and when you see them you know they are old. But Whittier at seventy-six was still quite young; he still had the merry eyes, the same lightness of step and his hair was not so very gray.

He was a very rollicking man when young was very tall with dark eyes and skin. He looked very little like a Yankee, and no one would think it from his habits. He did not dress like a Yankee. One time his little niece wanted a red coat. The minister upon having it, but met with opposition from all of the family on account of his Yankee customs. However, John Greenleaf finally succeeded the mother to let the child have her way.
His face was color-blend, and an incident is told of how the paper on his wall was torn and he watched it and found out that instead of the original gray piece he had put on a bright red one.

After the death of Elizabeth, a niece before mentioned, kept house for him until her marriage. He broke up Whittier's home and he went to Danvers which is about twenty miles from Boston.

Here he made his home at Oak Knoll and his conceits. Oak Knoll was a beautiful place with great trees and beautiful grass, with driveways and porches made it as beautiful as one might imagine. The trees are of special interest. Many of them being very rare. There are magnolias, and lily trees, English Elms, English Oak, and Starlight Pines. Cypresses and eucalyptus which doubt nature permits to grow in the climate of New England.

The garden and everything about it was a delight to Whittier, and hardly every morning he could be seen with his hat and rake working away at the beautiful plants. Here he was in truliness happy. He was near
Salem and Boston and many other places where
his most intimate friends lived, and the house
was always filled with callers. He loved the
pure air and nature, and consequently he
was out of doors a great deal.

One of the things he liked to do best was
to drive. His nature was fine, and he
could enjoy and do so, and many an
hour was spent in watching the squirrels
and other game upon the large many were
the signs "No Hunting on these Parts"
aid this was strictly enforced.

The house was not magnificent but
very beautiful and airy, and Whittier was
at home and happy there.

Although he stayed there and enjoyed
it all to the fullest extent, yet he loved to
wander back to the old familiar places
in Amesbury, Merrimack, and Salem;
but after a visit he always went back to
dear Oak Hill.

He was not a very forward boy, and
when a man was talkative, timid, with strangers
but he was very social, and had an unlimited
number of friends. He was a rather nervous
man, and did not enjoy being in a
hurrying crowd, but he liked to sit and watch a crowd. He quickly noted all the comical, also the grim side of the crowd and his description is always perfect. He enjoyed loafing about on a hot afternoon and taking in everything he could see. He always liked to help any young writer and often had a great deal of help taken with these young people, who, if they asked a favor from him, he would not refuse. He received a very good sum of money for many of his most important stories, and he never had much trouble in securing a publisher. Although he was not a rich man, he was very comfortable circumstances. His wealth was all gained through his pen.

He was a very fortunate author, and not infrequently he received twice as much for his compositions as he asked.

When he sent "Snow Bound" to the publishers, after having been paid for the poems he wrote away pretty well satisfied, but after a few weeks he was paid again the same sum.

Whittier was a great help to many poor souls, and dearly as we
all lost his name. This he has left to us

"Of loving friends who love me,
Oh dem dies gone above me,
Barless of the fame,
Clean to you my name"