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THE CENTENARY OF EVANGELINE

ON NOVEMBER 29, 1847, a Harvard professor sat in his home in Cambridge, writing a letter to Nathaniel Hawthorne. "I was delighted," he wrote, "to find that Evangeline is not without favor in your eyes.... I thank you for resigning to me that legend of Acady. This success I owe entirely to you, for being willing to forego the pleasure of writing a prose tale which many people would have taken for poetry, that I might write a poem which many people take for prose...."  

Professor Henry W. Longfellow was here alluding to the classical metre in which he had composed his recently published Evangeline. "My idyl in hexameters," he had called it. As far back as November 28, 1845, he had recorded in his journal the fact that "F. [his wife] and Sumner are both doubtful of the measure. To me it seems the only one for such a poem." Throughout 1846 he toiled at the task of composing the first important poem ever written on an American subject, and on February 27, 1847, he was able to record: "Evangeline is finished." Then began the process of revision and correction, of proof-reading and more correction. At last, on October 30, 1847, Longfellow's journal records: "Evangeline published."

On October 30, 1947, the Colby Library Associates observed the one-hundredth anniversary of this event by spending an evening with Longfellow under the leadership of Professor Luella F. Norwood. She spoke of Evangeline as one of Longfellow's major poems, and discussed with characteristic vigor and charm the problem presented by the sharp contrast between Longfellow's immense popularity one hundred years ago and his sad neglect today. The Library's copy of the first edition of Evangeline was on exhibition, together with other Longfellow "firsts" and with letters in his autograph.

The special bibliographical "points" of this first edi-
tion are discussed in an able article by Carroll A. Wilson, in the current issue of the *Papers* of the Bibliographical Society of America. The appearance of this article will remind the friends of Mr. Wilson at Colby as well as his friends elsewhere of the great loss the book-loving world has suffered by his death on June 27 of this year. Born in Benton Falls, Maine, Carroll Wilson attended school in Waterville almost in sight of the Colby College campus. In 1940 he became an honorary graduate of this college, and Colby College Monograph No. 9 was dedicated to him, in recognition of his generous gifts to the college library. Only once was he persuaded to address the Colby Library Associates, but he was often present in spirit and often sent volumes from his own library for exhibition on just such occasions as the present Longfellow celebration. If he had lived to take part in observing the centenary of *Evangeline*, we could have had no more interested participant and no more loyal and generous friend of the Colby Library. His death at the age of sixty-one has removed from the list of members of the Library Associates one whom we shall find it hard to replace.

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**SOME RECENT GIFTS**

That portion of our Hardy Collection which is made up of books that were once in the library of Thomas Hardy continues to grow. The latest arrival bearing the famous novelist's book-label is a copy of the first English edition of *A New England Nun and Other Stories* by Mary E. Wilkins (London, 1891). The book is signed "Thomas Hardy" on the title-page, but those who are familiar with his and with his wife's handwriting have found it easy to recognize that the signature was written by Mrs. Emma Lavinia Hardy and not by the novelist himself. The book was published by James R. Osgood, McIlvaine & Company—the same publishing house that issued Hardy's *Tess*.