

TAKE HEART

A Conversation in Poetry

*Edited & Introduced by Wesley McNair,
Maine Poet Laureate*

Those who question the depth of Maine's most famous poet, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, need look no further than this poem, in which he examines feelings just beneath the cordiality of a seasonal reunion.

The Meeting

by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

After so long an absence
At last we meet again:
Does the meeting give us pleasure,
Or does it give us pain?

The tree of life has been shaken,
And but few of us linger now,
Like the Prophet's two or three berries
In the top of the uppermost bough.

We cordially greet each other
In the old, familiar tone;
And we think, though we do not say it,
How old and gray he is grown!

We speak of a Merry Christmas
And many a Happy New Year;
But each in his heart is thinking
Of those that are not here.

We speak of friends and their fortunes,
And when they did and said,
Till the dead alone seem living,
And the living alone seem dead.

And at last we hardly distinguish
Between the ghosts and the guests;
And a mist and shadow of sadness
Steals over our merriest jests.

Take Heart: A Conversation in Poetry is produced in collaboration with the Maine Writers & Publishers Alliance. This poem is in the public domain. Questions about submitting to *Take Heart* may be directed to Gibson Fay-LeBlanc, Special Consultant to the Maine Poet Laureate, at mainepoetlaureate@gmail.com or 207-228-8263. *Take Heart: Poems from Maine, an anthology collecting the first two years of this column, is now available from Down East Books.*