

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

WALTER VON  
DER VOGELWEID

Vogelweid the Minnesinger,  
When he left this world of ours,  
Laid his body in the cloister,  
Under Wurtzburg's minster towers.  
And he gave the monks his treasures,  
Gave them all with this behest:  
They should feed the birds at noontide  
Daily on his place of rest;

Saying, "From these wandering minstrels  
I have learned the art of song;  
Let me now repay the lessons  
They have taught so well and long."  
Thus the bard of love departed;  
And, fulfilling his desire,  
On his tomb the birds were feasted  
By the children of the choir.

Day by day, o'er tower and turret,  
In foul weather and in fair,  
Day by day, in vaster numbers,  
Flocked the poets of the air.  
On the tree whose heavy branches  
Overshadowed all the place,  
On the pavement, on the tombstone,  
On the poet's sculptured face,



On the cross-bars of each window,  
On the lintel of each door,  
They renewed the War of Wartburg,  
Which the bard had fought before.

There they sang their merry carols,  
Sang their lauds on every side;  
And the name their voices uttered  
Was the name of Vogelweid.

Till at length the portly abbot  
Murmured, "Why this waste of food?  
Be it changed to loaves henceforward  
For our tasting brotherhood."

Then in vain o'er tower and turret,  
From the walls and woodland nests,  
When the minster bells rang noontide,  
Gathered the unwelcome guests.

Then in vain, with cries discordant,  
Clamorous round the Gothic spire,  
Screamed the feathered Minnesingers  
For the children of the choir.

Time has long effaced the inscriptions  
On the cloister's funeral stones,  
And tradition only tells us  
Where repose the poet's bones.

But around the vast cathedral,  
By sweet echoes multiplied,  
Still the birds repeat the legend,  
And the name of Vogelweid.