

But in mine is the wind of autumn,
And the first fall of the snow.
"Ye are better than all the ballads
That ever were sung or said :
For ye are living poems,
And all the rest are dead."

Perhaps one of the most felicitous of Mr. Longfellow's child poems is "The Children's Hour," which gives us a touching glimpse into his own beautiful and happy home life. Only those who knew the depth of his affection could appreciate the full meaning of the lines :—

"I have you fast in my fortress,
And will not let you depart ;
But put you down into the dungeon
In the round-tower of my heart."

As Dr. Holmes was one day riding past Craigie, Mr. Longfellow's Cambridge home, he remarked to his companion that he trembled to think of the inmates of that home, for their happiness was so perfect that any one of the many changes that must come to them in the ordinary course of life, must be a change for the worse. Too sadly prophetic were the words. But a short time afterward, Mrs. Longfellow, while sealing a letter, let the wax taper fall upon her light dress, which speedily ignited, and in spite of all efforts to save her, she expired in a few hours after the accident. The poet was nearly crazed with grief ; the work of years was done in a few days, and when his friends saw him again he was an old man. Thus was the gentle poet taught the utmost bitterness felt by human heart, and his poems we hereafter feel the touch of that sympathy which can alone come through suffering. Though written many years before, a few lines from "The Footsteps of Angels, seem singularly appropriate just here :—

"With a slow and noiseless footstep
Comes that messenger divine,
Takes the vacant chair beside me,
Lays her gentle hand in mine.
"And she sits and gazes at me
With those deep and tender eyes,
Like the stars, so still and saint-like,
Looking downward from the skies.
"Oh, though oft depressed and lonely,
All my fears are laid aside
If I but remember only
Such as these have lived and died."

In many other of his poems we find traces of this chastened sorrow of spirit.

combined with noble patience. In "Evangeline" he says :—

"Sorrow and silence are strong, and patient endurance is God-like,"

And in "The Light of the Stars" :—

"Ah, fear not in a world like this,
Know how sublime a thing it is
And thou shalt know ere long,
To suffer and be strong."

As we should expect, the poor, oppressed negro found in Longfellow an earnest and powerful friend, and there can be no doubt that the slaves owed their freedom very largely to the stirring appeals of Mrs. Stowe and the poets, Longfellow and Whittier. In one poem he thus pictures the woes of the poor slave :—

"A poor old slave, infirm and lame ;
Great scars deformed his face.
On his forehead he bore the brand of
shame,
And the rags that hid his manly frame
Were the livery of disgrace.
"All things above were bright and fair,
All things were glad and free.
Little squirrels darted here and there,
And wild birds filled the echoing air
With songs of Liberty.
"On him alone was the doom of pain,
From the morning of his birth ;
On him alone the curse of Cain
Fell, like a flail on the garnered grain,
And struck him to the earth."

The Indian, so often unwisely, and even brutally, used by the agents of the United States, also found in Mr. Longfellow a true friend, and the poet found in the legends of the prairies material for one of the most smooth flowing, beautiful and elevated poems of the English language. "Hiawatha" is a poem distinct from all others in its simple native purity, and where the singer Chibiabos is described we cannot but think that we have a striking picture of the poet himself.

"Most beloved by Hiawatha
Was the gentle Chibiabos :
He the sweetest of all singers,
Beautiful and childlike was he.
Fair as man is, soft as woman,
Pliant as a wand of willow,
Stately as a deer with antlers.
All the many sounds of nature
Borrowed sweetness from his singing,
Till the hearts of men were softened
By the pathos of his music,
For he sang of peace and freedom,
Sang of beauty, love and longing ;
Sang of death and life undying,