

new reading is ! We read with ten-fold pleasure Mr. Longfellow's "Skeleton in Armour," when we learn that it was while riding along the glorious beach at New Port, on a bright summer afternoon, that the subject of his poem appeared to him, clad in broken and corroded armour, and created so profound an impression on his mind that he could not rest until he put his thoughts to paper. And those tremendous lines on the "Wreck of the Hesperus," which all of you have read again and again, and which I used to read with an almost timid pleasure on stormy nights when the wind howled up the Bay of Fundy, and the vessels in the harbour rocked uneasily on their bed of white caps—those lines which tell of death and destruction, of the wreck and of the storm,—those lines so wild and grand. But how much wilder and grander do they seem when we know their history and the circumstances under which they were conceived. You who know the story, can you wonder at the frame of mind into which Longfellow was thrown, when the words of this ballad came wildly tearing into his head ? Can you realize the picture of the poet in his study sitting alone by the slowly dying fire,—sitting alone, smoking and thinking, and listening to the ticking of the "Old Clock on the Stairs," which seemed to croak the story of the great storm ? It was midnight, and the day after the gale. The wrecked Hesperus came sailing and plunging into his mind. Every passionate fancy of his brain fluttered and would not be stilled. There was no rest. He went to bed at last, but he could not sleep. He arose and during those few hours which come to us in the gray still morning, and which seem always the shortest, he wrote the burning words, not by single lines alone, but by whole stanzas. The clock struck three as the wearied minstrel concluded his labours. He had told his story :

Such was the wreck of the Hesperus,
In the midnight and the snow !
Christ save us all from a death like this,
On the reef of Norman's Woe !