

POEMS ON SLAVERY.  
BY  
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.  
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[The following poems, with one exception, were written at sea, in the latter part of  
October. I had not then heard of Dr. Channing's death. Since that event, the poem  
addressed to him is no longer appropriate. I have decided, however, to let it remain  
as it was written, a feeble testimony of my admiration for a great and good man.]

POEMS.

The noble horse,  
That, in his fiery youth, from his wide nostrils  
Neighed courage to his rider, and brake through  
Groves of opposed pikes, bearing his lord  
Safe to triumphant victory, old or wounded,  
Was set at liberty and freed from service.  
The Athenian mules, that from the quarry drew  
Marble, hewed for the Temple of the Gods,

The great work ended, were dismissed and fed  
At the public cost; nay, faithful dogs have found  
Their sepulchres; but man, to man more cruel,  
Appoints no end to the sufferings of his slave.  
Massinger.

[Pg 9]

TO WILLIAM E. CHANNING.

The pages of thy book I read,  
And as I closed each one,  
My heart, responding, ever said,  
"Servant of God! well done!"  
Well done! Thy words are great and bold;  
At times they seem to me,  
Like Luther's, in the days of old,  
Half-battles for the free.

[Pg 10]

Go on, until this land revokes  
The old and chartered Lie,  
The feudal curse, whose whips and yokes  
Insult humanity.

A voice is ever at thy side  
Speaking in tones of might,  
Like the prophetic voice, that cried  
To John in Patmos, "Write!"  
Write! and tell out this bloody tale;  
Record this dire eclipse,  
This Day of Wrath, this Endless Wail,  
This dread Apocalypse!

[Pg 11]

THE SLAVE'S DREAM.

Beside the ungathered rice he lay,  
His sickle in his hand;  
His breast was bare, his matted hair  
Was buried in the sand.  
Again, in the mist and shadow of sleep,  
He saw his Native Land.

[Pg 12]

Wide through the landscape of his dreams  
The lordly Niger flowed;  
Beneath the palm-trees on the plain  
Once more a king he strode;  
And heard the tinkling caravans  
Descend the mountain-road.  
He saw once more his dark-eyed queen

Among her children stand;  
They clasped his neck, they kissed his cheeks,  
They held him by the hand!—  
A tear burst from the sleeper's lids  
And fell into the sand.  
And then at furious speed he rode  
Along the Niger's bank;  
His bridle-reins were golden chains,  
And, with a martial clank,  
At each leap he could feel his scabbard of steel  
Smiting his stallion's flank.

[Pg 13]

Before him, like a blood-red flag,  
The bright flamingoes flew;  
From morn till night he followed their flight,  
O'er plains where the tamarind grew,  
Till he saw the roofs of Caffre huts,  
And the ocean rose to view.  
At night he heard the lion roar,  
And the hyæna scream,  
And the river-horse, as he crushed the reeds  
Beside some hidden stream;  
And it passed, like a glorious roll of drums,  
Through the triumph of his dream.  
The forests, with their myriad tongues,  
Shouted of liberty;  
And the Blast of the Desert cried aloud,  
With a voice so wild and free,  
That he started in his sleep and smiled  
At their tempestuous glee.

[Pg 14]

He did not feel the driver's whip,  
Nor the burning heat of day;  
For Death had illumined the Land of Sleep,  
And his lifeless body lay  
A worn-out fetter, that the soul  
Had broken and thrown away!

[Pg 15]

THE GOOD PART, THAT SHALL NOT BE TAKEN AWAY.  
She dwells by Great Kenhawa's side,  
In valleys green and cool;  
And all her hope and all her pride  
Are in the village school.  
Her soul, like the transparent air  
That robes the hills above,

Though not of earth, encircles there  
All things with arms of love.

[Pg 16]

And thus she walks among her girls  
With praise and mild rebukes;  
Subduing e'en rude village churls  
By her angelic looks.  
She reads to them at eventide  
Of One who came to save;  
To cast the captive's chains aside,  
And liberate the slave.  
And oft the blessed time foretells  
When all men shall be free;  
And musical, as silver bells,  
Their falling chains shall be.  
And following her beloved Lord,  
In decent poverty,  
She makes her life one sweet record  
And deed of charity.

[Pg 17]

For she was rich, and gave up all  
To break the iron bands  
Of those who waited in her hall,  
And labored in her lands.  
Long since beyond the Southern Sea  
Their outbound sails have sped,  
While she, in meek humility,  
Now earns her daily bread.  
It is their prayers, which never cease,  
That clothe her with such grace;  
Their blessing is the light of peace  
That shines upon her face.

[Pg 18]

THE SLAVE IN THE DISMAL SWAMP.  
In dark fens of the Dismal Swamp  
The hunted Negro lay;  
He saw the fire of the midnight camp,  
And heard at times a horse's tramp  
And a bloodhound's distant bay.  
Where will-o'-the-wisps and glowworms shine,  
In bulrush and in brake;  
Where waving mosses shroud the pine,  
And the cedar grows, and the poisonous vine  
Is spotted like the snake;

[Pg 19]

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