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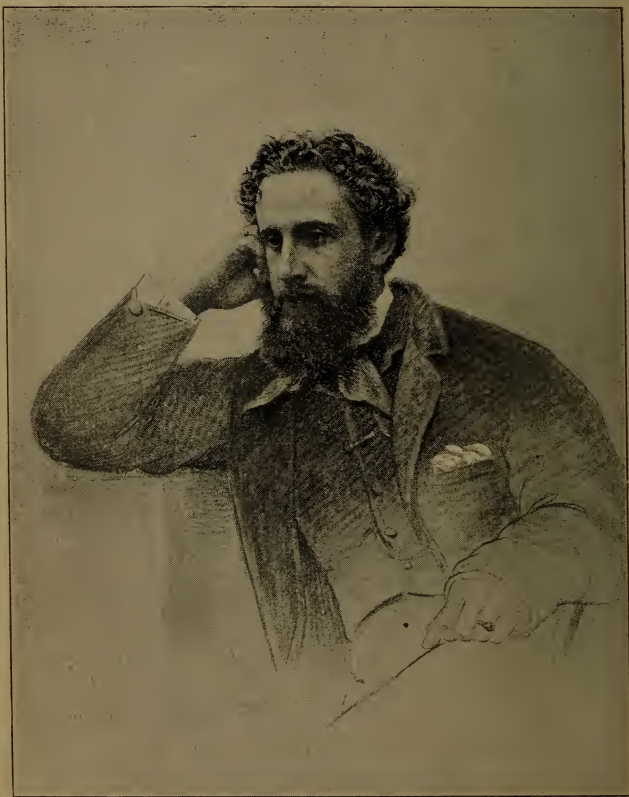
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1900

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



OWEN MEREDITH.



LUCILE

BY

OWEN MEREDITH

E. R. B. Hyatt.

CHICAGO

W. B. CONKEY COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

L

36080

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L7
1900

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DEDICATION.

TO MY FATHER.

I dedicate to you a work, which is submitted to the public with a diffidence and hesitation proportioned to the novelty of the effort it represents. For in this poem I have abandoned those forms of verse with which I had most familiarized my thoughts, and have endeavored to follow a path on which I could discover no footprints before me, either to guide or to warn.

There is a moment of profound discouragement which succeeds to prolonged effort; when, the labor which has become a habit having ceased, we miss the sustaining sense of its companionship, and stand, with a feeling of strangeness and embarrassment, before the abrupt and naked result. As regards myself in the present instance, the force of all such sensations is increased by the circumstances to which I have referred. And in this moment of discouragement and doubt, my heart instinctively turns to you, from whom it has so often sought, from whom it has never failed to receive, support.

I do not inscribe to you this book because it contains anything that is worthy of the beloved and honored name with which I thus seek to associate it; nor yet because I would avail myself of a vulgar pretext to display in public an affection that is best honored by the silence which it renders sacred.

Feelings only such as those with which, in days when there existed for me no critic less gentle than yourself, I brought to you my childish manuscripts; feelings only such as those which have, in later years, associated with your heart all that has moved or occupied my own—lead me once more to seek assurance from the grasp of that hand which has hitherto been my guide and comfort through the life I owe to you.

And as in childhood, when existence had no toil beyond the day's simple lesson, no ambition beyond the neighboring approval of the night, I brought to you the morning's task for the evening's sanction, so now I bring to you this self-appointed task-work of maturer years; less confident, indeed, of your approval, but not less confident of your love; and anxious only to realize your presence between myself and the public, and to mingle with those severer voices to whose final sentence I submit my work the beloved and gracious accents of your own.

OWEN MEREDITH.

LUCILE.

PART I.

CANTO I.

I.

LETTER FROM THE COMTESSE DE NEVERS TO
LORD ALFRED VARGRAVE.

“I hear from Bigorre you are there. I am told
You are going to marry Miss Darcy. Of old,
So long since you may have forgotten it now
(When we parted as friends, soon mere strang-
ers to grow),

Your last words recorded a pledge—what you
will—

A promise—the time is now come to fulfill.

The letters I ask you, my lord, to return,
I desire to receive from your hand. You dis-
cern

My reasons, which, therefore, I need not ex-
plain.

The distance to Serchon is short. I remain
A month in these mountains. Miss Darcy,
perchance,

Will forego one brief page from the summer
romance
Of her courtship, and spare you one day from
your place
At her feet, in the light of her fair English
face.

I desire nothing more, and I trust you will feel
I desire nothing much.

“Your friend always,
“LUCILE.”

II.

Now in May Fair, of course,—in the fair
month of May—

When life is abundant, and busy, and gay;
When the markets of London are noisy about
Young ladies, and strawberries,—“only just
out;”

Fresh strawberries sold under all the house-
eaves,

And young ladies on sale for the strawberry-
leaves;

When cards, invitations, and three-corner'd
notes

Fly about like white butterflies—gay little
motes

In the sunbeam of fashion; and even Blue
Books

Take a heavy-wing'd flight, and grow busy as
rooks;

And the postman (that Genius, indifferent and
stern,

Who shakes out even-handed to all, from his
urn,
Those lots which so often decide if our day
Shall be fretful and anxious, or joyous and
gay)
Brings, each morning, more letters of one sort
or other
Than Cadmus, himself, put together, to bother
The heads of Hellenes;—I say, in the season
Of Fair May, in May Fair, there can be no
reason
Why, when quietly munching your dry toast
and butter,
Your nerves should be suddenly thrown in a
flutter
At the sight of a neat little letter, address'd
In a woman's handwriting, containing, half-
guess'd,
An odor of violets faint as the Spring,
And coquettishly seal'd with a small signet-
ring,
But in Autumn, the season of somber reflec-
tion,
When a damp day, at breakfast, begins with
dejection;
Far from London and Paris, and ill at one's
ease,
Away in the heart of the blue Pyrenees,
Where a call from the doctor, a stroll to the
bath,
A ride through the hills on a hack like a lath,
A cigar, a French novel, a tedious flirtation,
Are all a man finds for his day's occupation,
The whole case, believe me, is totally changed,

And Lord Alfred, whilst moodily gazing
 around it,
 To himself more than once (vex'd in soul)
 sigh'd "Confound it!"

IV.

What the thoughts were which led to this bad
 interjection,
 Sir, or Madam, I leave to your future detection:
 For whatever they were, they were burst in
 upon,
 As the door was burst through, by my lord's
 Cousin John.

COUSIN JOHN.

A fool, Alfred, a fool, a most motley fool!

LORD ALFRED.

Who?

JOHN.

The man who has anything better to do;
 And yet so far forgets himself, so far degrades
 His position as Man, to this worst of all trades,
 Which even a well-brought-up ape were above,
 To travel about with a woman in love,—
 Unless she's in love with himself.

ALFRED.

Indeed! why

Are you here then, dear Jack?

JOHN.

Can't you guess it?

ALFRED.

Not I.

JOHN.

Because I have nothing that's better to do.
I had rather be bored, my dear Alfred, by you,
On the whole (I must own), than be bored by
myself.

That perverse, imperturbable, golden hair'd
elf—

Your Will-o-the-wisp—that has led you and me
Such a dance through these hills—

ALFRED.

Who, Matilda?

JOHN.

Yes! she,

Of course! who but she could contrive so to
keep

One's eyes, and one's feet too, from falling
asleep

For even one half-hour of the long twenty-
four?

ALFRED.

What's the matter?

JOHN.

Why, she is—a matter, the more
I consider about it, the more it demands
An attention it does not deserve; and expands
Beyond the dimensions which ev'n crinoline,
When possess'd by a fair face, and saucy
Eighteen,
Is entitled to take in this very small star,
Already too crowded, as I think, by far.
You read Malthus and Sadler?

ALFRED.

Of course.

JOHN.

To what use,
 When you countenance, calmly, such mon-
 strous abuse
 Of one mere human creature's legitimate space
 In this world? Mars, Apollo, Virorum! the
 case
 Wholly passes my patience.

ALFRED.

My own is worse tried.

JOHN.

Yours, Alfred?

ALFRED.

Read this, if you doubt, and decide.

JOHN (reading the letter).

"I hear from Bigorre you are there. I am told
 You are going to marry Miss Darcy. Of
 old—"

What is this?

ALFRED.

Read it on the end, and you'll know.

JOHN (continues reading).

"When we parted, your last words recorded a
 vow—

What you will"

Hang it! this smells all over, I swear,
 Of adventures and violets. Was it your hair
 You promised a lock of?

ALFRED.

Read on. You'll discern.

JOHN (continues).

“Those letters I ask you, my lord, to return.”
 Humph! . . . Letters! . . . the matter is
 worse than I guess'd;
 I have my misgivings—

ALFRED.

Well, read out the rest,
 And advise.

JOHN.

Eh? . . . Where was I?

(continues).

“Miss Darcy, perchance,
 Will forego one brief page from the summer
 romance
 Of her courtship.” . . .

Egad! a romance, for my part,
 I'd forego every page of, and not break my
 heart!

ALFRED.

Continue?

JOHN (reading).

“And spare you one day from your
 place at her feet.” . . .

Pray forgive me the passing grimace.
 I wish you had my place!

(reads.)

“I trust you will feel

I desire nothing much. Your friend" . . .
 Bless me! "Lucile?"
 The Comtesse de Nevers?

ALFRED.

Yes.

JOHN.

What will you do?

ALFRED.

You ask me just what I would rather ask you.

JOHN.

You can't go.

ALFRED.

I must.

JOHN.

And Matilda.

ALFRED

Oh, that

You must manage!

JOHN.

Must I? I decline it, though, flat.
 In an hour the horses will be at the door,
 And Matilda is now in her habit. Before
 I have finished my breakfast, of course I
 receive
 A message for "dear Cousin John!" . . . I
 must leave
 At the jeweler's the bracelet which you broke
 last night,

I must call for the music. "Dear Alfred is right:
 The black shawl looks best: will I change it?
 Of course
 I can just stop, in passing, to order the horse.
 Then Beau has the mumps, or St. Hubert
 knows what;
 Will I see the dog-doctor?" Hang Beau! I
 will not.

ALFRED.

Tush, tush! this is serious.

JOHN.

It is.

ALFRED.

Very well.

You must think—

JOHN.

What excuse will you make, tho'?

ALFRED.

Oh, tell

Mrs. Darcy that . . . lend me your wits, Jack!
 . . . the deuce!

Can you not stretch your genius to fit a friend's
 use?

Excuses are clothes which, when ask'd un-
 awares,

Good Breeding to Naked Necessity spares,
 You must have a whole wardrobe, no doubt.

JOHN.

My dear fellow,
Matilda is jealous, you know, as Othello.

ALFRED.

You joke.

JOHN.

I am serious. Why go to Serchon?

ALFRED.

Don't ask me. I have not a choice, my dear
John.

Besides, shall I own a strange sort of desire,
Before I extinguish forever the fire
Of youth and romance in whose shadowy light
Hope whisper'd her first fairy tales, to excite
The last spark, till it rise, and fade far in that
dawn

Of my days where the twilights of life were
first drawn

By the rosy, reluctant auroras of Love:

In short, from the dead Past the gravestone
to move;

Of the years long departed forever to take
One last look, one final farewell; to awake
The Heroic of youth from the Hades of joy,
And once more be, though but for an hour,
Jack—a boy!

JOHN.

You had better go hang yourself.

ALFRED.

No! were it but

To make sure that the Past from the Future is
 shut,
 It were worth the step back. Do you think we
 should live
 With the living so lightly, and learn to survive
 That wild moment in which to the grave and
 its gloom
 We consign'd our heart's best, if the doors of
 the tomb
 Were not lock'd with a key which Fate keeps
 for our sake?
 If the dead could return, or the corpses awake?

JOHN.

Nonsense!

ALFRED.

Not wholly. The man who gets up
 A fill'd guest from the banquet, and drains off
 his cup,
 Sees the last lamp extinguish'd with cheer-
 fulness, goes
 Well contented to bed, and enjoys its repose.
 But he who hath supp'd at the tables of kings,
 And yet starved in the sight of luxurious
 things;
 Who hath watch'd the wine flow, by himself
 but half tasted;
 Heard the music, and yet miss'd the tune; who
 hath wasted
 One part of life's grand possibilities;—friend,
 That man will bear with him, be sure, to the
 end
 A blighted experience, a rancor within:
 You may call it a virtue, I call it a sin.

JOHN.

I see you remember the cynical story
 Of that wicked old piece of Experience—a
 hoary
 Lothario, whom dying, the priest by his bed
 (Knowing well the unprincipled life he had
 led,
 And observing, with no small amount of sur-
 prise,
 Resignation and calm in the old sinner's eyes)
 Ask'd if he had nothing that weigh'd on his
 mind:
 "Well, . . . no," . . . says Lothario, "I think
 not. I find,
 On reviewing my life, which in most things
 was pleasant,
 I never neglected, when once it was present,
 An occasion of pleasing myself. On the whole,
 I have naught to regret;" . . . and so, smil-
 ing, his soul
 Took its flight from this world.

ALFRED.

Well, Regret or Remorse,
 Which is best?

JOHN.

Why, Regret.

ALFRED.

No, Remorse, Jack, of course;
 For the one is related, be sure, to the other.
 Regret is a spiteful old maid: but her brother,
 Remorse, though a widower certainly, yet

Has been wed to young Pleasure. Dear Jack,
hang Regret!

JOHN.

Bref! you mean, then, to go?

ALFRED.

Bref! I do.

JOHN.

One word . . . stay!
Are you really in love with Matilda?

ALFRED.

Love, eh?

What a question! Of course.

JOHN.

Were you really in love
With Madame de Nevers?

ALFRED.

What, Lucile? No, by Jove,
Never really.

JOHN.

She's pretty?

ALFRED.

Decidedly so.

At least, so she was, some ten summers ago.
As soft, and as sallow as Autumn—with hair
Neither black, nor yet brown, but that tinge
which the air
Takes at eve in September, when night lingers
lone

Through a vineyard, from beams of a slow
 setting sun.
 Eyes—the wistful gazelle's; the fine foot of
 a fairy;
 And a hand fit a fay's wand to wave,—white
 and airy;
 A voice soft and sweet as a tune that one
 knows,
 Something in her there was, set you thinking
 of those
 Strange backgrounds of Raphael . . . that
 hectic and deep
 Brief twilight in which southern suns fall
 asleep.

JOHN.

Coquette?

ALFRED.

Not at all. 'Twas her one fault. Not she!
 I had loved her the better, had she less loved
 me.
 The heart of a man's like that delicate weed
 Which requires to be trampled on, boldly
 indeed,
 Ere it give forth the fragrance you wish to
 extract.
 'Tis a simile, trust me, if not new, exact.

JOHN.

Women change so.

ALFRED.

Of course.

JOHN.

And, unless rumor errs,

I believe that, last year, the Comtesse de
 Nevers*
 Was at Baden the rage—held an absolute court
 Of devoted adorers, and really made sport
 Of her subjects.

ALFRED.

Indeed!

JOHN.

When she broke off with you
 Her engagement, her heart did not break
 with it?

ALFRED.

Pooh!

Pray would you have had her dress always in
 black,
 And shut herself up in a convent, dear Jack?
 Besides, 'twas my fault the engagement was
 broken.

JOHN.

Most likely. How was it?

*O Shakespeare! how could'st thou ask "What's in a
 name?"

'Tis the devil's in it, when a bard has to frame
 English rhymes for alliance with names that are
 French:

And in these rhymes of mine, well I know that I trench
 All too far on that license which critics refuse,
 With just right, to accord to a well-brought-up Muse.
 Yet, tho' faulty the union, in many a line,

'Twixt my British-born verse and my French heroine,
 Since, however auspiciously wedded they be,
 There is many a pair, that yet cannot agree,
 Your forgiveness for this pair, the author invites,
 Whom necessity, not inclination, unites.

ALFRED.

The tale is soon spoken.
 She bored me. I show'd it. She saw it.
 What next?
 She reproach'd. I retorted. Of course she
 was vex'd.
 I was vex'd that she was so. She sulk'd. So
 did I.
 If I ask'd her to sing, she look'd ready to cry.
 I was contrite, submissive. She soften'd. I
 harden'd.
 At noon I was banish'd. At eve I was par-
 don'd.
 She said I had no heart. I said she had no
 reason.
 I swore she talk'd nonsense. She sobb'd I
 talk'd treason.
 In short, my dear fellow, 'twas time, as you see,
 Things should come to a crisis, and finish.
 'Twas she
 By whom to that crisis the matter was brought.
 She released me. I linger'd. I linger'd, she
 thought,
 With too sullen an aspect. This gave me, of
 course,
 The occasion to fly in a rage, mount my horse,
 And declare myself uncomprehended. And so
 We parted. The rest of the story you know.

JOHN.

No, indeed.

ALFRED.

Well, we parted. Of course we could not
 Continue to meet, as before, in one spot.

You conceive it was awkward? Even Don
Ferdinando

Can do, you remember, no more than he can do.
I think that I acted exceedingly well,
Considering the time when this rupture befell,
For Paris was charming just then. It deranged
All my plans for the winter. I ask'd to be
changed—

Wrote for Naples, then vacant—obtain'd it—
and so

Join'd my new post at once; but scarce reach'd
it, when lo!

My first news from Paris informs me Lucile
Is ill, and in danger. Conceive what I feel.
I fly back. I find her recover'd, but yet
Looking pale. I am seized with a contrite re-
gret;

I ask to renew the engagement.

JOHN.

And she?

ALFRED.

Reflects, but declines. We part, swearing to
be

Friends ever, friends only. All that sort of
thing!

We each keep our letters . . . a portrait . . .
a ring.

With a pledge to return them whenever the
one

Or the other shall call for them back.

JOHN.

Pray go on.

ALFRED.

My story is finish'd. Of course I enjoin
On Lucile all those thousand good maxims we
coin

To supply the grim deficit found in our days,
When love leaves them bankrupt. I preach.
She obeys.

She goes out in the world; takes to dancing
once more—

A pleasure she rarely indulged in before.

I go back to my post, and collect (I must own
'Tis a taste I had never before, my dear John)
Antiques and small Elzevirs. Heigho! now,
Jack.

You know all.

JOHN (after a pause).

You are really resolved to go back?

ALFRED.

Eh, where?

JOHN.

To that worst of all places—the past.
You remember Lot's wife?

ALFRED.

'Twas a promise when last
We parted. My honor is pledged to it?

JOHN.

Well,
What is it you wish me to do?

ALFRED.

You must tell

Matilda, I meant to have call'd—to leave word—
To explain—but the time was so pressing—

JOHN.

My lord,

Your lordship's obedient! I really can't do . . .

ALFRED.

You wish then to break off my marriage?

JOHN.

No, no!

But, indeed, I can't see why yourself you need
take
These letters.

ALFRED.

Not see? would you have me, then, break
A promise my honor is pledged to?

JOHN (humming).

“Off, off
And away! said the stranger” . . .

ALFRED.

Oh, good! oh, you scoff!

JOHN.

At what, my dear Alfred?

ALFRED.

At all things!

JOHN.

Indeed?

ALFRED.

Yes; I see that your heart is as dry as a reed;
 That the dew of your youth is rubb'd off you;
 I see
 You have no feeling left in you, even for me!
 At honor you jest; you are cold as a stone
 To the warm voice of friendship. Belief you
 have none;
 You have lost faith in all things. You carry a
 blight
 About with you everywhere. Yes, at the sight
 Of such callous indifference, who could be
 calm?
 I must leave you at once, Jack, or else the last
 balm
 That is left me in Gilead you'll turn into gall.
 Heartless, cold, unconcern'd . . .

JOHN.

Have you done? Is that all?
 Well, then, listen to me! I presume when you
 you made
 Up your mind to propose to Miss Darcy, you
 weigh'd
 All the drawbacks against the equivalent gains,
 Ere you finally settled the point. What re-
 mains
 But to stick to your choice? You want money:
 'tis here.
 A settled position: 'tis yours. A career:
 You secure it. A wife, young, and pretty as
 rich,

Whom all men will envy you. Why must you
itch

To be running away, on the eve of all this,
To a woman whom never for once did you miss
All these years since you left her? Who knows
what may hap?

This letter—to me—is a palpable trap.
The woman has changed since you knew her.
Perchance

She yet seeks to renew her youth's broken
romance,

When women begin to feel youth and their
beauty

Slip from them, they count it a sort of a duty
To let nothing else slip away unsecured

Which these, while they lasted, might once
have procured,

Lucile's a coquette to the end of her fingers,
I will stake my last farthing. Perhaps the
wish lingers

To recall the once reckless, indifferent lover
To the feet he has left; let intrigue now re-
cover

What truth could not keep. 'Twere a ven-
geance, no doubt—

A triumph;—but why must you bring it about?
You are risking the substance of all that you
schemed

To obtain; and for what? some mad dream you
have dream'd.

ALFRED.

But there's nothing to risk. You exaggerate,
Jack,

You mistake. In three days, at the most, I am
back.

JOHN.

Ay, but how? . . . discontented, unsettled,
upset,
Bearing with you a comfortless twinge of re-
gret;
Preoccupied, sulky, and likely enough
To make your betroth'd break off all in a huff.
Three days, do you say? But in three days who
knows,
What may happen? I don't, nor do you, I
suppose.

v.

Of all the good things in this good world around
us,
The one most abundantly furnish'd and found
us,
And which for that reason we least care about,
And can best spare our friends, is good coun-
sel, no doubt.
But advice, when 'tis sought from a friend
(though civility
May forbid to avow it), means mere liability
In the bill we already have drawn on Remorse,
Which we deem that a true friend is bound to
indorse.
A mere lecture on debt from that friend is a
bore.
Thus, the better his cousin's advice was, the
more

Alfred Vargrave with angry resentment opposed it.
 And, having the worst of the contest, he closed it
 With so firm a resolve his bad ground to maintain,
 That, sadly perceiving resistance was vain,
 And argument fruitless, the amiable Jack
 Came to terms and assisted his cousin to pack
 A slender valise (the one small condescension
 Which his final remonstrance obtain'd) whose
 dimension
 Excluded large outfits; and, cursing his stars,
 he
 Shook hands with his friend and return'd to
 Miss Darcy.
 Lord Alfred, when last to the window he turn'd

VI.

Ere he lock'd up and quitted his chamber, discern'd
 Matilda ride by, with her cheek beaming bright
 In what Virgil has call'd, "Youth's purpleal light"
 (I like the expression, and can't find a better),
 He sigh'd as he look'd at her. Did he regret her?
 In her habit and hat, with her glad golden hair,
 As airy and blithe as a blithe bird in air,
 And her arch rosy lips, and her eager blue
 eyes,
 With her little impertinent look of surprise,

And her round youthful figure, and a fair neck
below
The dark drooping feather, as radiant as
snow,—
I can only declare, that if I had the chance
Of passing three days in the exquisite glance
Of those eyes, or caressing the hand that now
petted
That fine English mare, I should much have
regretted
Whatever might lose me one little half-hour
Of a pastime so pleasant, when once in my
power.
For, if one drop of milk from the bright Milky
Way
Could turn into a woman, 'twould look, I dare
say,
Not more fresh than Matilda was looking that
day.

VII.

But, whatever the feeling that prompted the
sigh
With which Alfred Vargrave now watch'd her
ride by,
I can only affirm that, in watching her ride,
As he turned from the window, he certainly
sigh'd.

CANTO II.

I.

LETTER FROM LORD ALFRED VARGRAVE TO
THE COMTESSE DE NEVERS.

“BIGORRE, Tuesday.

“Your note, Madam, reach'd me to-day, at
Bigorre,

And commands (need I add?) my obedience.
Before

The night I shall be at Serchon—where a line,
If sent to Duval's, the hotel where I dine,
Will find me, awaiting your orders. Receive
My respects.

“Yours sincerely,

“A. VARGRAVE.

“I leave

In an hour.”

II.

In an hour from the time he wrote this,
Alfred Vargrave, in tracking a mountain abyss,
Gave the rein to his steed and his thoughts,
and pursued,

In pursuing his course through the blue soli-
tude,

The reflections that journey gave rise to.

And here
(Because, without some such precaution, I fear
You might fail to distinguish them each from
the rest

Of the world they belong to; whose captives
are drest,

As our convicts, precisely the same one and
 all,
 While the coat cut for Peter is pass'd on to
 Paul)
 I resolve, one by one, when I pick from the
 mass
 The persons I want, as before you they pass,
 To label them broadly in plain black and white
 On the backs of them. Therefore, whilst yet
 he's in sight,
 I first label my hero.

III.

The age is gone o'er
 When a man may in all things be all. We have
 more
 Painters, poets, musicians, and artists, no doubt,
 Than the great Cinquecento gave birth to; but
 out
 Of a million of mere dilettanti, when, when
 Will a new Leonardo rise on our ken?
 He is gone with the age which begat him. Our
 own
 Is too vast, and too complex, for one man alone
 To embody its purpose, and hold it shut close
 In the palm of his hand. There were giants
 in those
 Irreclaimable days; but in these days of ours,
 In dividing the work, we distribute the powers.
 Yet a dwarf on a dead giant's shoulders sees
 more
 Than the 'live giant's eyesight availed to
 explore;

And in life's lengthen'd alphabet what used to
be

To our sires X Y Z is to us A B C.

A Vanini is roasted alive for his pains,
But a Bacon comes after and picks up his brains.
A Bruno is angrily seized by the throttle
And hunted about by thy ghost, Aristotle,
Till a More or Lavater steps into his place:
Then the world turns and makes an admiring
grimace.

Once the men were so great and so few, they
appear,

Through a distant Olympian atmosphere,
Like vast Caryatids upholding the age.

Now the men are so many and small, disengage
One man from the million to mark him, next
moment

The crowd sweeps him hurriedly out of your
comment;

And since we seek vainly (to praise in our
songs)

'Mid our fellows the size which to heroes
belongs,

We take the whole age for a hero, in want
Of a better: and still, in its favor, descant
On the strength and the beauty which, failing
to find

In any one man, we ascribe to mankind.

IV.

Alfred Vargrave was one of those men who
achieve

So little, because of the much they conceive.

With irresolute finger he knock'd at each one
 Of the doorways of life, and abided in none.
 His course, by each star that would cross it,
 was set,
 And whatever he did he was sure to regret.
 That target, discuss'd by the travelers of old,
 Which to one appear'd argent, to one appear'd
 gold,
 To him, ever lingering on Doubt's dizzy mar-
 gent,
 Appear'd in one moment both golden and
 argent.
 The man who seeks one thing in life, and but
 one,
 May hope to achieve it before life be done;
 But he who seeks all things, wherever he goes,
 Only reaps from the hopes which around him
 he sows
 A harvest of barren regrets. And the worm
 That crawls on in the dust to the definite term
 Of its creeping existence, and sees nothing
 more
 Than the path it pursues till its creeping be
 o'er,
 In its limited vision, is happier far
 Than the Half-Sage, whose course, fix'd by no
 friendly star
 Is by each star distracted in turn, and who
 knows
 Each will still be as distant wherever he goes.

v.

Both brilliant and brittle, both bold and
 unstable,

Indecisive yet keen, Alfred Vargrave seem'd
 able
 To dazzle, but not to illumine mankind.
 A vigorous, various, versatile mind;
 A character wavering, fitful, uncertain.
 As the shadow that shakes o'er a luminous
 curtain,
 Vague, fitting, but on it forever impressing
 The shape of some substance at which you
 stand guessing:
 When you said, "All is worthless and weak
 here," behold!
 Into sight on a sudden there seem'd to unfold
 Great outlines of strenuous truth in the man:
 When you said, "This is genius," the outlines
 grew wan.
 And his life, though in all things so gifted and
 skill'd,
 Was, at best, but a promise which nothing ful-
 fill'd.

VI.

In the budding of youth, ere wild winds can
 deflower
 The shut leaves of man's life, round the germ
 of his power
 Yet folded, his life had been earnest. Alas!
 In that life one occasion, one moment, there
 was
 When this earnestness might, with the life-sap
 of youth,
 Lusty fruitage have borne in his manhood's
 full growth;

But it found him too soon, when his nature
was still
The delicate toy of too pliant a will,
The boisterous wind of the world to resist.
Or the frost of the world's wintry wisdom.
He miss'd
That occasion, too rathe in its advent.
Since then
He had made it a law, in his commerce with
men,
That intensity in him, which only left sore
The heart it disturb'd, to repel and ignore.
And thus, as some Prince by his subjects
deposed,
Whose strength he, by seeking to crush it, dis-
closed,
In resigning the power he lack'd power to sup-
port,
Turns his back upon courts, with a sneer at the
court,
In his converse this man for sel-comfort
appeal'd
To a cynic denial of all he conceal'd
In the instincts and feelings belied by his
words.
Words, however, are things: and the man who
accords
To his language the license to outrage his soul,
Is controll'd by the words he disdains to con-
trol.
And, therefore, he seem'd in the deeds of each
day,
The light code proclaim'd on his lips to obey;

And, the slave of each whim, follow'd willfully
 aught
 That perchance fool'd the fancy, or flatter'd
 the thought.
 Yet, indeed, deep within him, the spirits of
 truth,
 Vast, vague aspirations, the powers of his
 youth,
 Lived and breathed, and made moan—stirr'd
 themselves—strove to start
 Into deeds—though deposed, in that Hades,
 his heart.
 Like those antique Theogonies ruin'd and
 hurl'd,
 Under clefts of the hills, which, convulsing the
 world,
 Heaved, in earthquake, their heads the rent
 caverns above,
 To trouble at times in the light court of Jove
 All its frivolous gods, with an undefined awe,
 Of wrong'd rebel powers that own'd not their
 law.
 For his sake, I am fain to believe that, if born
 To some lowlier rank (from the world's languid
 scorn
 Secured by the world's stern resistance), where
 strife,
 Strife and toil, and not pleasure, gave purpose
 to life,
 He possibly might have contrived to attain
 Not eminence only, but worth. So, again,
 Had he been of his own house the first-born,
 each gift
 Of a mind many-gifted had gone to uplift

A great name by a name's greatest uses.

But there

He stood isolated, opposed, as it were,
To life's great realities; part of no plan,
And if ever a nobler and happier man
He might hope to become, that alone could be
when

With all that is real in life and in men
What was real in him should have been recon-
ciled;

When each influence now from experience
exiled

Should have seized on his being combined with
his nature,

And form'd, as by fusion, a new human crea-
ture:

As when those airy elements viewless to sight
(The amalgam of which, if our science be right,
The germ of this populous planet doth fold)

Unite in the glass of the chemist, behold!
Where a void seem'd before, there a substance
appears,

From the fusion of forces whence issued the
spheres!

VII.

But the permanent cause why his life fail'd and
miss'd

The full value of life was,—where man should
resist

The world, which man's genius is call'd to com-
mand,

He gave way, less from lack of the power to
withstand,

Than from lack of the resolute will to retain
Those strongholds of life which the world
 strives to gain.

Let this character go in the old-fashion'd way,
With the moral thereof tightly tacked to it.

Say—

“Let any man once show the world that he
 feels

Afraid of its bark, and 'twill fly at his heels:

Let him fearlessly face it, 'twill leave him
 alone:

But 'twill fawn at his feet if he flings it a bone.”

VIII.

The moon of September, now half at the full,
Was unfolding from darkness and dreamland
 the lull

Of the quiet blue air, where the many-faced
 hills

Watch'd, well-pleased, their fair slaves, the
 light, foam-footed rills.

Dance and sing down the steep marble stairs of
 their courts,

And gracefully fashion a thousand sweet sports.

Lord Alfred (by this on his journeying far)

Was pensively puffing his Lopez cigar

And brokenly humming an old opera strain,

And thinking, perchance, of those castles in
 Spain

Which that long rocky barrier hid from his
 sight;

When suddenly, out of the neighboring night,
A horseman emerged from a fold of the hill,

And so startled his steed that was winding at
will
Up the thin dizzy strip of a pathway which led
O'er the mountain—the reins on its neck, and
its head
Hanging lazily forward—that, but for a hand
Light and ready, yet firm, in familiar com-
mand,
Both rider and horse might have been in a trice
Hurl'd horribly over the grim precipice.

IX.

As soon as the moment's alarm had subsided,
And the oath with which nothing can find
unprovided
A thoroughbred Englishman, safely exploded,
Lord Alfred unbent (as Apollo his bow did
Now and then) his erectness; and looking,
not ruder
Than such inroad would warrant, survey'd the
intruder,
Whose arrival so nearly cut short in his glory
My hero, and finished abruptly this story.

X.

The stranger, a man of his own age or less,
Well mounted, and simple though rich in his
dress,
Wore his beard and mustache in the fashion of
France.
His face, which was pale, gather'd force from
the glance
Of a pair of dark, vivid, and eloquent eyes.
With a gest of apology, touch'd with surprise,

He lifted his hat, bow'd, and courteously made
 Some excuse in such well-cadenced French as
 betray'd
 At the first word he spoke, the Parisian.

XI.

I swear I have wander'd about in the world
 everywhere;
 From many strange mouths have heard many
 strange tongues;
 Strain'd with many strange idioms my lips and
 my lungs;
 Walk'd in many a far land, regretting my own;
 In many a language groaned many a groan;
 And have often had reason to curse those wild
 fellows
 Who built the high house at which Heaven
 turn'd jealous.
 Making human audacity stumble and stammer
 When seized by the throat in the hard gripe of
 Grammar.
 But the language of languages dearest to me
 Is that in which once *O ma toute cherie*,
 When, together, we bent o'er your nosegay for
 hours,
 You explain'd what was silently said by the
 flowers,
 And, selecting the sweetest of all, sent a flame
 Through my heart, as, in laughing, you mur-
 mur'd *Je t'aime*.

XII.

The Italians have voices like peacocks; the
 Spanish

Smell, I fancy, of garlic; the Swedish and
 Danish
 Have something too Runic, too rough and un-
 shod, in
 Their accents for mouths not descended from
 Odin;
 German gives me a cold in the head, sets me
 wheezing
 And coughing; and Russian is nothing but
 sneezing;
 But, by Belus and Babel! I never have heard,
 And I never shall hear (I well know it) one
 word,
 Of that delicate idiom of Paris without
 Feeling morally sure, beyond question or doubt
 By the wild way in which my heart inwardly
 flutter'd
 That my heart's native tongue to my heart
 had been utter'd.
 And whene'er I hear French spoken as I
 approve
 I feel myself quietly falling in love.

XIII.

Lord Alfred, on hearing the stranger, appeased
 By a something, an accent, a cadence, which
 pleased
 His ear with that pledge of good breeding
 which tells
 At once of the world in whose fellowship dwells
 The speaker that owns it, was glad to remark
 In the horseman a man one might meet after
 dark
 Without fear.

And thus, not disagreeably impress'd,
As it seem'd, with each other, the two men
abreast
Rode on slowly a moment.

XIV.

STRANGER.

I see, Sir, you are
A smoker. Allow me!

ALFRED.

Pray take a cigar.

STRANGER.

Many thanks! . . . Such cigars are a luxury here.
Do you go to Serchon?

ALFRED.

Yes; and you?

STRANGER.

Yes. I fear,
Since our road is the same, that our journey
must be
Somewhat closer than is our acquaintance.
You see
How narrow the path is. I'm tempted to ask
Your permission to finish (no difficult task!)
The cigar you have given me (really a prize!)
In your company.

ALFRED.

Charm'd, Sir, to find your road lies
In the way of my own inclinations! Indeed
The dream of your nation I find in this weed.

In the distant Savannahs a talisman grows
That makes all men brothers that use it . . .
who knows?

That blaze which erewhile from the *Boulevard*
outbroke,
It has ended where wisdom begins, Sir,—in
smoke.

Messieurs Lozez (whatever your publicists
write)

Have done more in their way human kind to
unite,

Perchance, than ten Prudhons.

STRANGER.

Yes. Ah, what a scene!

ALFRED.

Humph! Nature is here too pretentious. Her
mien

Is too haughty. One likes to be coax'd, not
compell'd,

To the notice such beauty resents if withheld,
She seems to be saying too plainly, "Admire
me!"

And I answer, "Yes, madam, I do: but you
tire me."

STRANGER.

That sunset, just now though . .

ALFRED.

A very old trick!

One would think that the sun by this time
must be sick

Of blushing at what, by this time, he must
 know
 Too well to be shocked by—this world.

STRANGER.

Ah, 'tis so
 With us all. 'Tis the sinner that best knew
 the world
 At Twenty, whose lip is, at sixty, most curl'd
 With disdain of its follies. You stay at Ser-
 chon?

ALFRED.

A day or two only.

STRANGER.

The season is done.

ALFRED.

Already!

STRANGER.

'Twas shorter this year than the last.
 Folly soon wears her shoes out. She dances
 so fast,
 We are all of us tired.

ALFRED.

You know the place well.

STRANGER.

I have been there two seasons.

ALFRED.

Pray who is the Belle
 Of the Baths at this moment?

STRANGER.

The same who has been
The belle of all places in which she is seen;
The belle of all Paris last winter; last spring
The belle of all Baden.

ALFRED.

An uncommon thing!

STRANGER.

Sir, an uncommon beauty! . . . I rather should
say,
An uncommon character. Truly, each day
One meets women whose beauty is equal to
hers,
But none with the charm of Lucile de Nevers.

ALFRED.

Madame de Nevers!

STRANGER.

Do you know her?

ALFRED.

I know.

Or, rather, I knew her—a long time ago.
I almost forget. . .

STRANGER.

What a wit! what a grace
In her language! her movements! what play
in her face!
And yet what a sadness she seems to conceal!

ALFRED.

You speak like a lover.

STRANGER.

I speak as I feel,
 But not like a lover. What interests me so
 In Lucile, at the same time forbids me, I
 know,
 To give to that interest, whate'er the sensa-
 tion,
 The name we men give to an hour's admiration
 A night's passing passion, an actress's eyes,
 A dancing girl's ankles, a fine lady's sighs.

ALFRED.

Yes, I quite comprehend. But this sadness—
 this shade
 Which you speak of? . . . it almost would make
 me afraid
 Your gay countrymen, Sir, less adroit must
 have grown,
 Since when, as a stripling, at Paris, I own
 I found in them terrible rivals,—if yet
 They have all lack'd the skill to console this
 regret
 (If regret be the word I should use), or fulfill
 This desire (if desire be the word), which
 seems still
 To endure unappeased. For I take it for
 granted,
 From all that you say, that the will was not
 wanted.

XV.

The stranger replied, not without irritation,
 "I have heard that an Englishman—one of
 your nation
 I presume—and if so, I must beg you, indeed,
 To excuse the contempt which I . . ."

ALFRED.

Pray, Sir, proceed
 With your tale. My compatriot, what was his
 crime?

STRANGER.

Oh, nothing! His folly was not so sublime
 As to merit that term. If I blamed him just
 now,
 It was not for the sin, but the silliness.

ALFRED.

How?

STRANGER.

I own I hate Botany. Still, . . . I admit,
 Although I myself have no passion for it,
 And do not understand, yet I cannot despise
 The cold man of science, who walks with his
 eyes
 All alert through a garden of flowers, and
 strips
 The lilies' gold tongues, and the roses' red
 lips,
 With a ruthless dissection; since he, I suppose,
 Has some purpose beyond the mere mischief
 he does.

But the stupid and mischievous boy, that up-
 roots
 The exotics, and tramples the tender young
 shoots,
 For a boy's brutal pastime, and only because
 He knows no distinction 'twixt heartsease and
 haws,—
 One would wish, for the sake of each nursling
 so nipp'd,
 To catch the young rascal and have him well
 whipp'd!

ALFRED.

Some compatriot of mine, do I then under-
 stand,
 With a cold Northern heart, and a rude Eng-
 lish hand,
 Has injured your Rosebud of France?

STRANGER.

Sir, I know

But little, or nothing. Yet some faces show
 The last act of a tragedy in their regard:
 Though the first scenes be wanting, it yet is
 not hard
 To divine, more or less, what the plot may have
 been,
 And what sort of actors have pass'd o'er the
 scene.
 And whenever I gaze on the face of Lucile,
 With its pensive and passionless languor, I
 feel
 That some feeling hath burnt there . . . burnt
 out, and burnt up

Health and hope. So you feel when you gaze
 down the cup
 Of extinguished volcanoes; you judge of the
 fire
 Once there, by the ravage you see;—the de-
 sire,
 By the apathy left in its wake, and that sense
 Of a moral, immovable, mute impotence.

ALFRED.

Humph! . . . I see you have finished, at last,
 your cigar;
 Can I offer another?

STRANGER.

No, thank you. We are
 Not two miles from Serchon.

ALFRED.

You know the road well?

STRANGER.

I have often been over it.

XVI.

Here a pause fell
 On their converse. Still musingly on, side by
 side,
 In the moonlight, the two men continued to
 ride
 Down the dim mountain pathway. But each
 for the rest
 Of their journey, although they still rode on
 abreast,

Continued to follow in silence the train
Of the different feelings that haunted his brain;
And each, as though roused from a deep rever-
ery,
Almost shouted, descending the mountain, to
see
Burst at once on the moonlight the silvery
Baths,
The long lime-tree alley, the dark gleaming
paths,
With the lamps twinkling through them—the
quaint wooden roofs—
The little white houses.
The clatter of hoofs,
And the music of wandering bands, up the
walls
Of the steep hanging hill, at remote intervals
Reached them, cross'd by the sound of the
clacking of whips,
And here and there, faintly, through serpen-
tine slips
Of verdant rose-gardens deep-sheltered with
screens
Of airy acacias and dark evergreens,
They could mark the white dresses and catch
the light songs
Of the lovely Parisians that wander'd in
thongs,
Led by Laughter and Love through the old
eventide
Down the dream-haunted valley, or up the hill-
side.

XVII.

At length, at the door of the inn l'Herisson
 (Pray go there, if ever you go to Serchon!),
 The two horsemen, well pleased to have reach'd
 it, alighted

And exchanged their last greetings.

The Frenchman invited
 Lord Alfred to dinner. Lord Alfred declined.
 He had letters to write, and felt tired. So he
 dined

In his own rooms that night.

With an unquiet eye
 He watched his companion depart; nor knew
 why,

Beyond all accountable reason or measure,
 He felt in his breast such a sovran displeasure.

"The fellow's good-looking," he murmur'd at
 last,

"And yet not a coxcomb." Some ghost of the
 past

Vex'd him still.

"If he love her," he thought, "let him win
 her."

Then he turn'd to the future—and order'd his
 dinner.

XVIII.

O hour of all hours, the most bless'd upon
 earth,

Blessed hour of our dinners!

The land of his birth;
 The face of his first love; the bills that he
 owes;

The twaddle of friends and the venom of foes;

The sermon he heard when to church he last
 went;
 The money he borrow'd, the money he spent;—
 All of these things a man, I believe, may for-
 get,
 And not be the worse for forgetting; but yet
 Never, never, oh, never! earth's luckiest sin-
 ner
 Hath unpunish'd forgotten the hour of his din-
 ner!
 Indigestion, that conscience of every bad stom-
 ach,
 Shall relentlessly gnaw and pursue him with
 some ache
 Or some pain; and trouble, remorseless, his
 best ease,
 As the Furies once troubled the sleep of
 Orestes.

XIX.

✕ We may live without poetry, music and art;
 We may live without conscience, and live with-
 out heart;
 We may live without friends; we may live
 without books;
 But civilized man cannot live without cooks.
 He may live without books,—what is knowl-
 edge but grieving?
 He may live without hope,—what is hope but
 deceiving?
 He may live without love,—what is passion but
 pining?
 But where is the man that can live without
 dining?

XX.

Lord Alfred found, waiting his coming, a note
From Lucile.

“Your last letter has reach’d me,” she
wrote.

“This evening, alas! I must go to the ball,
And shall not be at home till too late for your
call;

But to-morrow, at any rate, *sans faute*, at One
You will find me at home, and will find me
alone.

Meanwhile, let me thank you sincerely, milord,
For the honor with which you adhere to your
word.

Yes, I thank you, Lord Alfred! To-morrow
then.

“L.”

XXI.

I find myself terribly puzzled to tell
The feelings with which Alfred Vargrave flung
down

This note, as he pour’d out his wine. I must
own

That I think he, himself, could have hardly
explain’d

Those feelings exactly,

“Yes, yes,” as he drain’d
The glass down, he mutter’d, “Jack’s right,
after all.

The coquette!”

“Does milord mean to go to the ball?”
Ask’d the waiter, who linger’d.

“Perhaps.—I don’t know.

You may keep me a ticket, in case I should
go.'

XXII.

Oh, better, no doubt, is a dinner of herbs,
When season'd by love, which no rancor dis-
turbs,
And sweeten'd by all that's sweetest in life,
Than turbot, bisque, ortolans, eaten in strife!
But if, out of humor, and hungry, alone,
A man should sit down to a dinner, each one
Of the dishes of which the cook chooses to spoil
With a horrible mixture of garlic and oil,
The chances are ten against one, I must own,
He gets up as ill-temper'd as when he sat down.
And if any reader this fact to dispute is
Disposed, I say . . . "*Allium edat cicutis
Nocentius!*"

Over the fruit and the wine
Undisturb'd the wasp settled. The evening
was fine.
Lord Alfred his chair by the window had set,
And languidly lighted his small cigarette.
The window was open. The warm air without
Waved the flame of the candles. The moths
were about.
In the gloom he sat gloomy.

XXIII.

Gay sounds from below
Floated up like faint echoes of joys long ago,
And night deepen'd apace; through the dark
avenues

The lamps twinkled bright; and by threes and
by twos,
The idlers of Serchon were strolling at will,
As Lord Alfred could see from the cool win-
dow-sill,
Where his gaze, as he languidly turn'd it, fell
o'er
His late traveling companion, now passing be-
fore
The inn, at the window of which he still sat,
In full toilet,—boots varnish'd, and snowy cra-
vat,
Gayly smoothing and buttoning a yellow kid
glove,
As he turned down the avenue.

Watching above,

From his window, the stranger, who stopp'd as
he walk'd
To mix with those groups and now nodded,
now talk'd,
To the young Paris dandies, Lord Alfred dis-
cern'd
By the way hats were lifted, and glances were
turn'd,
That this unknown acquaintance, now bound
for the ball,
Was a person of rank or of fashion; for all
Whom he bow'd to in passing, or stopped with
and chatter'd,
Walk'd on with a look which implied . . . “I
feel flatter'd!”

XXIV.

His form was soon lost in the distance and
gloom.

XXV.

Lord Alfred still sat by himself in his room.
He had finish'd, one after the other, a dozen
Or more cigarettes. He had thought of his
cousin:
He had thought of Matilda, and thought of
Lucile:
He had thought about many things; thought a
great deal
Of himself, of his past life, his future, his
present:
He had thought of the moon, neither full moon
nor crescent;
Of the gay world, so sad! life, so sweet and so
sour!
He had thought, too, of glory, and fortune,
and power;
Thought of love, and the country, and sym-
pathy, and
A poet's asylum in some distant land:
Thought of man in the abstract, and woman,
no doubt,
In particular; also he had thought much about
His digestion, his debts, and his dinner: and
last
He thought that the night would be stupidly
pass'd
If he thought any more of such matters at all;
So he rose and resolved to set out for the ball.

XXVI.

I believe, ere he finish'd his tardy toilet,
That Lord Alfred had spoil'd, and flung by in
a pet,
Half a dozen white neckcloths, and looked for
the nonce
Twenty times in the glass, if he look'd in it
once.
I believe that he split up, in drawing them on,
Three pair of pale lavender gloves, one by one.
And this is the reason, no doubt, that at last,
When he reached the Casino, although he
walk'd fast,
He heard, as he hurriedly entered the door,
The church clock struck Twelve.

XXVII.

The last waltz was just o'er.
The chaperons and dancers were all in a flutter.
A crowd blocked the door; and a buzz and a
mutter
Went about in the room as a young man,
whose face
Lord Alfred had seen ere he enter'd that place,
But a few hours ago, through the perfumed
and warm
Flowery porch, with a lady that lean'd on his
arm
Like a queen in a fable of old fairy days,
Left the ballroom.

XXVIII.

The hubbub of comment and praise
 Reach'd Lord Alfred as just then he enter'd.
“*Ma foi!*”
 Said a Frenchman beside him, . . . “That
 lucky Luvois
 Has obtained all the gifts of the gods . . . rank
 and wealth,
 And good looks, and then such inexhaustible
 health!
 He that hath shall have more; and this truth,
 I surmise,
 Is the cause why, to-night, by the beautiful
 eyes
 Of *la charmante Lucile* more distinguish'd than
 all,
 He so gayly goes off with the belle of the
 ball.”

“Is it true,” asked a lady aggressively fat,
 Who, fierce as a female Leviathan, sat
 By another that look'd like a needle, all steel
 And tenuity—“Luvois will marry Lucile?”
 The needle seem'd jerk'd by a virulent twitch,
 As though it were bent upon driving a stitch
 Through somebody's character.

“Madam,” replied,
 Interposing, a young man who sat by their
 side,
 And was languidly fanning his face with his
 hat,
 “I am ready to bet my new Tilbury that,
 If Luvois has proposed, the Comtesse has
 refused.”

The fat and thin ladies were highly amused.
 "Refused! . . . what! a young Duke, not
 thirty, my dear,
 With at least half a million (what is it?) a
 year!"

"That may be," said the third; "yet I know
 some time since
 Castelmar was refused, though as rich, and a
 Prince.

But Luvois, who was never before in his life
 In love with a woman who was not a wife,
 Is now certainly serious."

XXIX.

The music once more
 Recommenced.

XXX.

Said Lord Alfred, "This ball is a bore!
 And return'd to the inn, somewhat worse than
 before.

XXXI.

There, whilst musing, he lean'd the dark
 valley above,
 Through the warm land were wand'ring the
 spirits of love,
 A soft breeze in the white window drapery
 stirr'd;
 In the blossom'd acacia the lone cricket chirr'd;
 The scent of the roses fell faint o'er the night,
 And the moon on the mountain was dreaming
 in light.
 Repose, and yet rapture! that pensive wild
 nature

Impregnate with passion in each breathing
feature!

A stone's throw from thence, through the large
lime trees peep'd

In a garden of roses, a white chalet, steep'd
In the moonbeams. The windows oped down
to the lawn;

The casements were open; the curtains were
drawn;

Lights stream'd from the inside; and with
them the sound

Of music and song. In the garden, around
A table with fruits, wine, tea, ices, there set,
Half a dozen young men and young women
were met.

Light, laughter, and voices, and music all
stream'd

Through the quiet-leaved limes. At the win-
dow there seem'd

For one moment the outline, familiar and fair,
Of a white dress, white neck, and soft dusky
hair

Which Lord Alfred remember'd . . . a moment
or so

It hover'd, then pass'd into shadow; and slow
The soft notes, from a tender piano upflung,
Floated forth, and a voice unforgotten thus
sung:—

“Hear a song that was born in the land of my
birth!

The anchors are lifted the fair ship is free,
And the shouts of the mariners float in its
mirth

'Twixt the light in the sky and the light on
the sea.

“And this ship is a world. She is freighted
with souls,
She is freighted with merchandise: proudly
she sails
With the Labor that stores, and the Will that
controls
The gold in the ingots, the silk in the bales.

“From the gardens of Pleasure, where reddens
the rose,
And the scent of the cedar is faint on the
air,
Past the harbors of Traffic, sublimely she goes,
Man's hopes o'er the world of the waters to
bear!

“Where the cheer from the harbors of Traffic
is heard,
Where the gardens of Pleasure fade fast on
the sight,
O'er the rose, o'er the cedar, there passes a
bird,
'Tis the Paradise Bird, never known to alight.

“And that bird, bright and bold as a Poet's
desire,
Roams her own native heavens, the realms
of her birth.
There she soars like a seraph, she shines like a
fire,

And her plumage hath never been sullied by
earth,

“And the mariners greet her; there’s song on
each lip,
For that bird of good omen, and joy in each
eye.

And the ship and the bird, and the bird and
the ship,
Together go forth over ocean and sky.

“Fast, fast fades the land! far the rose-gar-
dens flee,
And far fleet the harbors. In regions
unknown

The ship is alone on a desert of sea,
And the bird in a desert of sky is alone.

“In those regions unknown, o’er that desert of
air,
Down that desert of waters—tremendous in
wrath—

The storm-wind Euroclydon leaps from his lair,
And cleaves, through the waves of the ocean,
his path.

“And the bird in the cloud, and the ship on
the wave,
Overtaken, are beaten about by wild gales;
And the mariners all rush their cargo to save,
Of the gold in the ingots, the silk in the
bales.

“Lo! a wonder, which never before hath been
heard,
For it never before hath been given to sight,
On the ship hath descended the Paradise
Bird,
The Paradise Bird, never known to alight!

“The bird which the mariners bless'd, when
each lip
Had a song from the omen that gladden'd
each eye;
The bright bird for shelter hath flown to the
ship
From the wrath on the sea and the wrath in
the sky.

“But the mariners heed not the bird any more.
They are felling the masts—they are cutting
the sails;
Some are working, some weeping, and some
wrangling o'er
Their gold in the ingots, their silk in the
bales.

“Soul of men are on board; wealth of man in
the hold;
And the storm-wind Euroclydon sweeps to
his prey;
And who heeds the bird? ‘Save the silk and
the gold!’
And the bird from her shelter the gust
sweeps away!

“Poor Paradise Bird! on her lone flight once
 more
 Back again in the wake of the wind she is
 driven—
 To be ’whelmed in the storm, or above it to
 soar,
 And, if rescued from ocean, to vanish in
 heaven!

“And the ship rides the waters, and weathers
 the gales:
 From the haven she nears the rejoicing is
 heard,
 All hands are at work on the ingots, the bales,
 Save a child, sitting lonely, who misses—the
 Bird.”

CANTO III.

I.

With stout iron shoes be my Pegasus shod!
 For my road is a rough one: flint, stubble, and
 clod,
 Blue clay, and black quagmire, brambles no
 few,
 And I gallop up-hill, now.
 There’s terror that’s true
 In that tale of a youth who, one night at a
 revel,
 Amidst music and mirth lured and wiled by
 some devil,

Follow'd ever one mask through the mad mas-
querade,
Till, pursued to some chamber deserted ('tis
said),
He unmask'd, with a kiss, the strange lady,
and stood
Face to face with a thing not of flesh nor of
blood.
In this Mask of the Passions, call'd Life, there's
no human
Emotion, though mask'd, or in man or in
woman,
But, when faced and unmask'd, it will leave
us at last
Struck by some supernatural aspect aghast.
For truth is appalling and eldritch, as seen
By this world's artificial lamplights, and we
screen
From our sight the strange vision that troubles
our life.
Alas! why is Genius forever at strife
With the world, which, despite the world's
self, it ennobles?
Why is it that Genius perplexes and troubles
And offends the effete life it comes to renew?
'Tis the terror of truth! 'tis that Genius is true.

II.

Lucile de Nevers (if her riddle I read)
Was a woman of genius: whose genius, indeed,
With her life was at war. Once, but once, in
that life
The chance had been hers to escape from this
strife

In herself; finding peace in the life of another
 From the passionate wants she, in hers, failed
 to smother.

But the chance fell too soon, when the crude
 restless power

Which had been to her nature so fatal a dower,
 Only wearied the man it yet haunted and
 thrall'd;

And that moment, once lost, had been never
 recall'd.

Yet it left her heart sore: and to shelter her
 heart

From approach she then sought, in that deli-
 cate art

Of concealment, those thousand adroit strat-
 egies

Of feminine wit, which repel while they please,
 A weapon, at once, and a shield to conceal

And defend all that women can earnestly feel.

Thus, striving her instincts to hide and
 repress,

She felt frighten'd at times by her very suc-
 cess:

She pined for the hill-tops, the clouds, and the
 stars:

Golden wires may annoy us as much as steel
 bars

If they keep us behind prison-windows: impas-
 sion'd

Her heart rose and burst the light cage she
 had fashion'd

Out of glittering trifles around it.

Unknown

To herself, all her instincts, without hesitation,

Embraced the idea of self-immolation.

The strong spirit in her, had her life but been blended

With some man's whose heart had her own comprehended,

All its wealth at his feet would have lavishly thrown.

For him she had struggled and striven alone;

For him had aspired; in him had transfused

All the gladness and grace of her nature; and used

For him only the spells of its delicate power:

Like the ministering fairy that brings from her bower

To some maze all the treasures, whose use the fond elf,

More enrich'd by her love, disregards for herself.

But standing apart, as she ever had done,

And her genius, which needed a vent, finding none

In the broad fields of action thrown wide to man's power,

She unconsciously made it her bulwark and tower,

And built in it her refuge, whence lightly she hurl'd

Her contempt at the fashions and forms of the world.

And the permanent cause why she now miss'd
 and fail'd
 That firm hold upon life she so keenly assail'd,
 Was, in all those diurnal occasions that place
 Say—the world and the woman opposed face
 to face,
 Where the woman must yield, she, refusing to
 stir,

Offended the world, which in turn wounded
 her.

As before, in the old-fashion'd manner, I fit
 To this character, also, its moral; to wit,
 Say—the world is a nettle; disturb it, it stings:
 Grasp it firmly, it stings not. On one of two
 things,

If you would not be stung, it behooves you to
 settle:

Avoid it, or crush it. She crush'd not the nettle;
 For she could not; nor would she avoid it; she
 tried

With the weak hand of woman to thrust it
 aside,

And it stung her. A woman is too slight a
 thing

To trample the world without feeling its sting.

III.

One lodges but simply at Serchon; yet, thanks
 To the season that changes forever the banks
 Of the blossoming mountains, and shifts the
 light cloud

O'er the valley, and hushes or rouses the loud

Wind that wails in the pines, or creeps mur-
muring down
The dark evergreen slopes to the slumbering
town,
And the torrent that falls, faintly heard from
afar,
And the blue-bells that purple the dapple-gray
scaur,
One sees with each month of the many-faced
year
A thousand sweet changes of beauty appear.
The chalet where dwelt the Comtesse de
Nevers
Rested half up the base of a mountain of firs,
In a garden of roses, reveal'd to the road,
Yet withdrawn from its noise: 'twas a peace-
ful abode.
And the walls, and the roofs, with their gables
like hoods,
Which the monks wear, were built of sweet
resinous woods.
The sunlight of noon, as Lord Alfred ascended
The steep garden paths, every odor had
blended
Of the ardent carnations, and faint heliotropes,
With the balms floated down from the dark
wooded slopes:
A light breeze at the windows was playing
about,
And the white curtains floated, now in, and
now out.
The house was all hush'd when he rang at the
door,

Which was open'd to him in a moment, or
more,
By an old nodding negress, whose sable head
shined
In the sun like a cocoa-nut polish'd in Ind,
'Neath the snowy *foulard* which about it was
wound,
Lord Alfred sprang forward at once, with a
bound,
He remember'd the nurse of Lucile. The old
dame,
Whose teeth and whose eyes used to beam
when he came,
With a boy's eager step, in the blithe days of
yore,
To pass, unannounced, her young mistress's
door.
The old woman had fondled Lucile on her
knee
When she left, as an infant, far over the sea,
In India the tomb of a mother, unknown,
To pine, a pale flow'ret, in great Paris town.
She had sooth'd the child's sobs on her breast,
when she read
The letter that told her her father was dead.
An astute, shrewd adventurer, who, like
Ulysses,
Had studied men, cities, laws, wars, the abysses
Of statecraft, with varying fortunes, was he.
He had wander'd the world through, by land
and by sea,
And knew it in most of its phases. Strong
will,

Subtle tact, and soft manners, had given him
skill

To conciliate Fortune, and courage to brave
Her displeasure. Thrice shipwreck'd, and cast
by the wave

On his own quick resources, they rarely had
fail'd

His command: often baffled, he ever prevail'd,
In his combat with fate: to-day flatter'd and
fed

By monarchs, to-morrow in search of mere
bread.

The offspring of times trouble-haunted he came
Of a family ruin'd, yet noble in name.

He lost sight of his fortune, at twenty, in
France;

And, half statesman, half soldier, and wholly
Freelance,

Had wander'd in search of it, over the world,
Into India.

But scarce had the nomad unfurl'd
His wandering tent at Mysore, in the smile
Of a Rajah (whose court he controll'd for a
while,

And whose council he prompted and govern'd
by stealth);

Scarce, indeed, had he wedded an Indian of
wealth,

Who died giving birth to this daughter, be-
fore

He was borne to the tomb of his wife at
Mysore.

His fortune, which fell to his orphan, per-
chance

Had secured her a home with his sister in
 France,
 A lone woman, the last of the race left. Lucile
 Neither felt, nor affected, the wish to conceal
 The half-Eastern blood, which appear'd to
 bequeath
 (Reveal'd now and then, though but rarely,
 beneath
 That outward repose that conceal'd it in her)
 A something half wild to her strange character.
 The nurse with the orphan, awhile broken-
 hearted,
 At the door of a convent in Paris had parted.
 But later, once more, with her mistress she
 tarried,
 When the girl, by that grim maiden aunt, had
 been married
 To a dreary old Count, who had sullenly died,
 With no claim on her tears—she had wept as
 a bride.
 Said Lord Alfred, "Your mistress expects me."
 The crone
 Opened the drawing-room door, and there left
 him alone.

v.

O'er the soft atmosphere of this temple of
 grace
 Rested silence and perfume. No sound reach'd
 the place.
 In the white curtains waver'd the delicate shade
 Of the heaving acacias, through which the
 breeze play'd.

O'er the smooth wooden floor, polished dark
as a glass,

Fragrant white Indian matting allowed you to
pass.

In light olive baskets, by window and door,
Some hung from the ceiling, some crowding
the floor,

Rich wild flowers pluck'd by Lucile from the
hill,

Seem'd the room with their passionate pres-
ence to fill:

Blue aconite, hid in white roses, reposed;

The deep belladonna its vermeil disclosed;

And the frail saponaire, and tender blue-bell,

And the purple valerian,—each child of the fell

And the solitude flourish'd, fed fair from the
source

Of waters the huntsman scarce heeds in his
course;

Where the chamois and izard, with delicate
hoof,

Pause or flit through the pinnacled silence
aloof.

VI.

Here you felt, by the sense of its beauty
reposed,

That you stood in a shrine of sweet thoughts.

Half enclosed

In the light slept the flowers; all was pure and
at rest;

All peaceful; all modest; all seem'd self-pos-
sess'd,

And aware of the silence. No vestige nor
trace

Of a young woman's coquetry troubled the
place.

He stood by the window. A cloud pass'd the
sun.

A light breeze uplifted the leaves, one by one.
Just then Lucile enter'd the room, undiscern'd
By Lord Alfred, whose face to the window was
turn'd,

In a strange revery.

The time was, when Lucile,
In beholding that man, could not help but
reveal

The rapture, the fear, which wrench'd out
every nerve

In the heart of the girl from the woman's
reserve.

And now—she gazed at him, calm, smiling,—
perchance

Indifferent.

VII.

Indifferently turning his glance,
Alfred Vargrave encounter'd that gaze un-
aware.

O'er a bodice snow-white stream'd her soft
dusky hair;

A rose-bud half blown in her hand; in her
eyes

A half-pensive smile.

A sharp cry of surprise
Escaped from his lips: some unknown agita-
tion,

An invincible, a strange palpitation,
 Confused his ingenious and frivolous wit;
 Overtook, and entangled, and paralyzed it.
 That wit so complacent and docile, that ever
 Lightly came at the call of the lightest en-
 deavor,
 Ready coin'd, and availably current as gold,
 Which, secure of its value, so fluently roll'd
 In free circulation from hand on to hand
 For the usage of all, at a moment's command;
 For once it rebell'd, it was mute and unstirr'd,
 And he look'd at Lucile without speaking a
 word.

VIII.

Perhaps what so troubled him was, that the
 face
 On whose features he gazed had no more than
 a trace
 Of the face his remembrance had imaged for
 years.
 Yes! the face he remember'd was faded with
 tears:
 Grief had famish'd the figure, and dimm'd the
 dark eyes,
 And starved the pale lips, too acquainted with
 sighs
 And that tender, and gracious, and fond *coquet-
 terie*
 Of a woman who knows her least ribbon to be
 Something dear to the lips that so warmly
 caress
 Every sacred detail of her exquisite dress,
 In the careless toilet of Lucile,—then too sad

To care aught to her changeable beauty to
add—

Lord Alfred had never admired before!

Alas! poor Lucile, in those weak days of yore,
Had neglected herself, never heeding, or
thinking

(While the blossom and bloom of her beauty
were shrinking)

That sorrow can beautify only the heart—

Not the face—of a woman; and can but impart
Its endearment to one that has suffer'd. In
truth

Grief hath beauty for grief; but gay youth
loves gay youth.

IX.

The woman that now met, unshrinking, his
gaze,

Seem'd to bask in the silent but sumptuous haze
Of that soft second summer, more ripe than
the first.

Which returns when the bud to the blossom
hath burst,

In despite of the stormiest April. Lucile
Had acquired that matchless unconscious
appeal

To the homage which none but a churl would
withhold—

That caressing and exquisite grace—never
bold,

Ever present—which just a few women possess.
From a healthful repose, undisturb'd by the
stress

Of unquiet emotions, her soft cheek had drawn

A freshness as pure as the twilight of dawn.
 Her figure, though slight, had revived every-
 where
 The luxurious proportions of youth; and her
 hair—
 Once shorn as an offering to passionate love—
 Now floated or rested redundant above
 Her airy pure forehead and throat; gather'd
 loose
 Under which, by one violet knot, the profuse
 Milk-white folds of a cool modest garment
 reposed.
 Rippled faint by the breast they half hid, half
 disclosed,
 And her simple attire thus in all things reveal'd
 The fine art which so artfully all things con-
 ceal'd.

x.

Lord Alfred, who never conceived that Lucile
 Could have look'd so enchanting, felt tempted
 to kneel
 At her feet, and her pardon with passion im-
 plore;
 But the calm smile that met him sufficed to
 restore
 The pride and the bitterness needed to meet
 The occasion with dignity due and discreet.

xi.

"Madam,"—thus he began with a voice
 reassured,—
 "You see that your latest command has secured
 My immediate obedience—presuming I may

Consider my freedom restored from this day."—
 "I had thought," said Lucile, with a smile gay
 yet sad,

"That your freedom from me not a fetter has
 had.

Indeed! . . . in my chains have you rested till
 now?

I had not so flattered myself, I avow!"

"For Heaven's sake, Madam," Lord Alfred
 replied,

"Do not jest! has the moment no sadness?"
 he sigh'd.

" 'Tis an ancient tradition," she answer'd, "a
 tale

Often told—a position too sure to prevail
 In the end of all legends of love. If we wrote,
 When we first love, foreseeing that hour yet
 remote,

Wherein of necessity each would recall
 From the other the poor foolish records of all
 Those emotions, whose pain, when recorded,
 seem'd bliss,

Should we write as we wrote? But one thinks
 not of this!

At Twenty (who does not at Twenty?) we write
 Believing eternal the frail vows we plight;
 And we smile with a confident pity, above
 The vulgar results of all poor human love:
 For we deem, with that vanity common to
 youth,

Because what we feel in our bosoms, in truth,
 Is novel to us—that 'tis novel to earth,
 And will prove the exception, in durance and
 worth,

To the great law to which all on earth must
incline.

The error was noble, the vanity fine.

Shall we blame it because we survive it? ah,
no;

'Twas the youth of our youth, my lord, is it
not so?''

XII.

Lord Alfred was mute. He remember'd her
yet

A child—the weak sport of each moment's re-
gret,

Blindly yielding herself to the errors of life,
The deceptions of youth, and borne down by
the strife

And the tumult of passion; the tremulous toy
Of each transient emotion of grief or of joy.

But to watch her pronounce the death-warrant
of all

The illusions of life—lift, unflinching, the pall
From the bier of the dead Past—that woman
so fair,

And so young, yet her own self-survivor; who
there

Traced her life's epitaph with a finger so cold!
'Twas a picture that pain'd his self-love to be-
hold.

He himself knew—none better—the things to
be said

Upon subjects like this. Yet he bow'd down
his head:

And as thus, with a trouble he could not com-
mand,

He paused, crumpling the letters he held in his
hand,

“You know me enough,” she continued, “or
what

I would say is, you yet recollect (do you not,
Lord Alfred?) enough of my nature, to know
That these pledges of what was perhaps long
ago

A foolish affection, I do not recall
From those motives of prudence which actuate
all

Or most women when their love ceases. In-
deed,

If you have such a doubt, to dispel it I need
But remind you that ten years these letters
have rested

Unreclaim'd in your hands.” A reproach
seem'd suggested

By these words. To meet it, Lord Alfred
look'd up.

(His gaze had been fix'd on a blue Sevres cup
With a look of profound connoisseurship—a
smile

Of singular interest and care, all this while.)

He look'd up, and look'd long in the face of
Lucile,

To mark if that face by a sign would reveal
At the thought of Miss Darcy the least jealous
pain.

He look'd keenly and long, yet he look'd there
in vain.

“You are generous, Madam,” he murmur'd at
last,

And into his voice a light irony pass'd.

He had look'd for reproaches, and fully arranged
 His forces. But straightway the enemy
 changed
 The position.

XIII.

“Come!” gayly Lucile interposed,
 With a smile whose divinely deep sweetness
 disclosed
 Some depth in her nature he never had known,
 While she tenderly laid her light hand on his
 own,
 “Do not think I abuse the occasion. We gain
 Justice, judgment, with years, or else years
 are in vain.
 From me not a single reproach can you hear.
 I have sinn'd to myself—to the world—nay, I
 fear
 To you chiefly. The woman who loves should,
 indeed,
 Be the friend of the man that she loves. She
 should heed.
 Not her selfish and often mistaken desires,
 But his interest whose fate her own interest
 inspires;
 And, rather than seek to allure, for her sake,
 His life down the turbulent, fanciful wake
 Of impossible destinies, use all her art
 That his place in the world find its place in her
 heart.
 I, alas!—I perceived not this truth till too late;
 I tormented your youth, I have darken'd your
 fate.

Forgive me the ill I have done for the sake
Of its long expiation!"

XIV.

Lord Alfred, awake
Seem'd to wander from dream on to dream.

In that seat

Where he sat as a criminal, ready to meet
His accuser, he found himself turn'd by some
change,

As surprising and all unexpected as strange,
To the judge from whose mercy indulgence
was sought.

All the world's foolish pride in that moment
was naught;

He felt all his plausible theories posed;
And, thrill'd by the beauty of nature disclosed
In the pathos of all he had witness'd, his head
He bow'd, and faint words self-reproachfully
said,

As he lifted her hand to his lips. 'Twas a hand
White, delicate, dimpled, warm, languid, and
bland.

The hand of a woman is often, in youth,
Somewhat rough, somewhat red, somewhat
graceless, in truth;

Does its beauty refine, as its pulses grow calm,
Or as sorrow has cross'd the life-line in the
palm?

XV.

The more that he look'd, that he listen'd, the
more

He discover'd perfections unnoticed before.
Less saliant than once, less poetic, perchance,

This woman who thus had survived the romance
 That had made him its hero, and breathed him
 its sighs,
 Seem'd more charming a thousand times o'er
 to his eyes.

Together they talk'd of the years since when
 last

They parted, contrasting the present, the past.
 Yet no memory marr'd their light converse.

Lucile

Question'd much, with the interest a sister
 might feel

Of Lord Alfred's new life,—of Miss Darcy—
 her face,

Her temper, accomplishments — pausing to
 trace

The advantage derived from a hymen so fit.

Of herself, she recounted with humor and wit
 Her journeys, her daily employments, the lands
 She had seen, and the books she had read, and
 the hands

She had shaken.

 In all that she said there appear'd
 An amiable irony. Laughing, she rear'd
 The temple of reason, with ever a touch
 Of light scorn at her work, reveal'd only so
 much

As there gleams, in the thyrsus that Baccha-
 nals bear,

Through the blooms of a garland the point of
 a spear,

But above, and beneath, and beyond all of this,
 To that soul, whose experience had paralyzed
 bliss,

A benignant indulgence, to all things resign'd,
A justice, a sweetness, a meekness of mind,
Gave a luminous beauty, as tender and faint
And serene as the halo encircling a saint.

XVI.

Unobserved by Lord Alfred the time fled by.
To each novel sensation spontaneously
He abandon'd himself with that ardor so
 strange
Which belongs to a mind grown accustom'd to
 change.
He sought, with well-practiced and delicate art,
To surprise from Lucile the true state of her
 heart;
But his efforts were vain, and the woman as
 ever,
More adroit than the man, baffled every en-
 deavor.
When he deem'd he touch'd on some chord in
 her being,
At the touch it dissolved, and was gone. Ever
 fleeing
As ever he near it advanced, when he thought
To have seized, and proceeded to analyze aught
Of the moral existence, the absolute soul,
Light as vapor the phantom escaped his con-
 trol.

XVII.

From the hall, on a sudden, a sharp ring was
 heard.
In the passage without a quick footstep there
 stirr'd.

At the door knock'd the negress, and thrust in
her head,

“The Duke de Luvois had just enter'd,” she
said,

“And insisted”—

“The Duke!” cried Lucile (as she spoke,
The Duke's step, approaching, a light echo
woke).

“Say I do not receive till the evening. Ex-
plain,”

As she glanced at Lord Alfred, she added again,
“I have business of private importance.”

There came
O'er Lord Alfred at once, at the sound of that
name

An invincible sense of vexation. He turn'd
To Lucile, and he fancied he faintly discern'd
On her face an indefinite look of confusion.
On his mind instantaneously flash'd the con-
clusion

That his presence had caused it.

He said, with a sneer
Which he could not repress, “Let not me inter-
fere

With the claims on your time, lady! when you
are free

From more pleasant engagements, allow me to
see

And to wait on you later.”

The words were not said
Ere he wish'd to recall them. He bitterly read
The mistake he had made in Lucile's flashing
eye.

Inclining her head, as in haughty reply,

More reproachful perchance than all utter'd
 rebuke,
 She said merely, resuming her seat, "Tell the
 Duke
 He may enter."

And vex'd with his own words and hers,
 Alfred Vargrave bow'd low to Lucile de
 Nevers,
 Pass'd the casement and enter'd the garden.
 Before
 His shadow was fled the Duke stood at the door.

XVIII.

When left to his thoughts in the garden alone,
 Alfred Vargrave stood, strange to himself.
 With dull tone
 Of importance, through cities of rose and car-
 nation,
 Went the bee on his business from station to
 station.
 The minute mirth of summer was shrill all
 around;
 Its incessant small voices like stings seem'd to
 sound
 On his sore angry sense. He stood grieving
 the hot
 Solid sun with his shadow, nor stirr'd from the
 spot
 The last look of Lucile still bewilder'd, per-
 plex'd,
 And reproach'd him. The Duke's visit goaded
 and vex'd.
 He had not yet given the letters. Again
 He must visit Lucile. He resolved to remain

Where he was till the Duke went. In short,
he would stay,
Were it only to know when the Duke went
away.

But just as he form'd this resolve, he perceived
Approaching toward him, between the thick-
leaved

And luxuriant laurels, Lucile and the Duke.
Thus surprised, his first thought was to seek
for some nook

Whence he might, unobserved, from the gar-
den retreat.

They had not yet seen him. The sound of
their feet

And their voices had warn'd him in time. They
were walking

Towards him. The Duke (a true Frenchman)
was talking

With the action of Talma. He saw at a glance
That they barr'd the sole path to the gateway.

No chance

Of escape save an instant concealment! Deep-
dipp'd

In thick foliage, an arbor stood near. In he
slipp'd,

Saved from sight, as in front of that ambush
they pass'd,

Still conversing. Beneath a laburnum at last
They paused, and sat down on a bench in the
shade,

So close that he could not but hear what they
said.

XIX.

LUCILE.

Duke, I scarcely conceive . . .

LUVOIS.

Ah, forgive! . . . I desired
So deeply to see you to-day. You retired
So early last night from the ball . . . this whole
week

I have seen you pale, silent, preoccupied . . .
speak,

Speak, Lucile, and forgive me! . . . I know
that I am

A rash fool—but I love you! I love you,
madame,

More than language can say! Do not deem,
O Lucile,

That the love I no longer have strength to
conceal

Is a passing caprice! It is strange to my
nature,

It has made me, unknown to myself, a new
creature.

I implore you to sanction and save the new life
Which I lay at your feet with this prayer—Be
my wife;

Stoop, and raise me!

Lord Alfred could scarcely restrain
The sudden, acute pang of anger and pain
With which he had heard this. As though to
some wind

The leaves of the hush'd, windless laurels
behind

The two thus in converse were suddenly stirr'd.
The sound half betrayed him. They started.

He heard

The low voice of Lucile; but so faint was its
tone

That her answer escaped him.

Luvois hurried on,

As though in remonstrance with what had
been spoken.

“Nay, I know it, Lucile! but your heart was
not broken

By the trial in which all its fibres were
proved,

Love, perchance, you mistrust, yet you need
to be loved,

You mistake your own feelings. I fear you
mistake

What so ill I interpret, those feelings which
make

Words like these vague and feeble. Whatever
your heart

May have suffer'd of yore, this can only impart
A pity profound to the love which I feel,

Hush! hush! I know all. Tell me nothing,
Lucile.”

“You know all, Duke?” she said; “well, then,
know that, is truth,

I have learn'd from the rude lesson taught to
my youth

From my own heart to shelter my life: to
mistrust

The heart of another. We are what we must,
And not what we would be. I know that one

hour

Assures not another. The will and the power
Are diverse."

"O madam!" he answer'd, "you fence
With a feeling you know to be true and intense.
'Tis not my life, Lucile, that I plead for alone:
If your nature I know, 'tis no less for your
own.

That nature will prey on itself; it was made
To influence others. Consider," he said,
"That genius craves power—what scope for it
here?

Gifts less noble to me give command of that
sphere

In which genius is power. Such gifts you
despise?

But you do not disdain what such gifts realize!
I offer you, Lady, a name not unknown—
A fortune which worthless, without you, is
grown—

All my life at your feet I lay down—at your
feet

A heart which for you, and you only, can
beat."

LUCILE.

That heart, Duke, that life—I respect both.
The name

And position you offer, and all that you claim
In behalf of their nobler employment, I feel
To deserve what, in turn, I now ask you—

LUVOIS.

Lucile!

LUCILE.

I ask you to leave me—

LUVUOIS.

You do not reject?

LUCILE.

I ask you to leave me the time to reflect.

LUVUOIS.

You ask me?—

LUCILE.

—The time to reflect.

LUVUOIS.

Say—One word!

May I hope?

The reply of Lucile was not heard
 By Lord Alfred; for just then she rose, and
 moved on
 The Duke bow'd his lips o'er her hand, and
 was gone.

xx.

Not a sound save the birds in the bushes.
 And when
 Alfred Vargrave reel'd forth to the sunlight
 again,
 He just saw the white robe of the woman recede
 As she enter'd the house.
 Scarcely conscious indeed
 Of his steps, he too follow'd, and enter'd.

xxi.

He enter'd
 Unnoticed; Lucile never stirr'd: so concen-
 tred
 And wholly absorb'd in her thoughts she
 appear'd.

Her back to the window was turn'd. As he
 near'd
 The sofa, her face from the glass was reflected.
 Her dark eyes were fix'd on the ground. Pale,
 dejected,
 And lost in profound meditation she seem'd.
 Softly, silently, over her droop'd shoulders
 stream'd
 The afternoon sunlight. The cry of alarm
 And surprise which escaped her, as now on her
 arm
 Alfred Vargrave let fall a hand icily cold
 And clammy as death, all too cruelly told
 How far he had been from her thoughts.

XXII.

All his cheek

Was disturb'd with the effort it cost him to
 speak.
 "It was not my fault. I have heard all," he
 said.
 "Now the letters—and farewell, Lucile! When
 you wed
 May—"

The sentence broke short, like a weapon that
 snaps
 When the weight of a man is upon it.

"Perhaps,"

Said Lucile (her sole answer reveal'd in the
 flush
 Of quick color which up to her brows seem'd
 to rush
 In reply to those few broken words), "this fare-
 well

Is our last, Alfred Vargrave, in life. Who can
tell?

Let us part without bitterness. Here are your
letters.

Be assured I retain you no more in my fet-
ters!"—

She laughed, as she said this, a little sad laugh.
And stretched out her hand with the letters.

And half

Wroth to feel his wrath rise, and unable to
trust

His own powers of restraint, in his bosom he
thrust

The packet she gave, with a short angry sigh,
Bow'd his head, and departed without a reply.

XXIII.

And Lucile was alone. And the men of the
world

Were gone back to the world. And the world's
self was furl'd

Far away from the heart of the woman. Her
hand

Droop'd, and from it, unloosed from their frail
silken band,

Fell those early love-letters, strewn, scatter'd,
and shed

At her feet—life's lost blossoms! Dejected,
her head

On her bosom was bow'd. Her gaze vaguely
stray'd o'er

Those strewn records of passionate moments
no more.

From each page to her sight leapt some word
 that belied
 The composure with which she that day had
 denied
 Every claim on her heart to those poor perish'd
 years.
 They avenged themselves now, and she burst
 into tears.

CANTO V.

I.

LETTER FROM COUSIN JOHN TO COUSIN ALFRED.

“BIGORRE, Thursday.

“Time up, you rascal! Come back, or be
 hang'd.
 Matilda grows peevish. Her mother har-
 angued
 For a whole hour this morning about you.
 The deuce!
 What on earth can I say to you?—nothing's of
 use.
 And the blame of the whole of your shocking
 behavior
 Falls on me, sir! Come back,—do you hear?
 —or I leave your
 Affairs, and abjure you forever. Come back
 To your anxious betroth'd; and perplex'd
 “COUSIN JACK.”

II.

Alfred needed, in truth, no entreaties from
John
To increase his impatience to fly from Serchon.
All the place was now fraught with sensations
of pain
Which, whilst in it, he strove to escape from
in vain
A wild instinct warn'd him to fly from a place
Where he felt that some fatal event, swift of
pace,
Was approaching his life. In despite his
endeavor
To think of Matilda, her image forever
Was effaced from his fancy by that of Lucile.
From the ground which he stood on he felt
himself reel.
Scared, alarm'd by those feelings to which, on
the day
Just before, all his heart had so soon given
way,
When he caught, with a strange sense of fear,
for assistance
At what was, till then, the great fact in exist-
ence,
'Twas a phantom he grasp'd.

III.

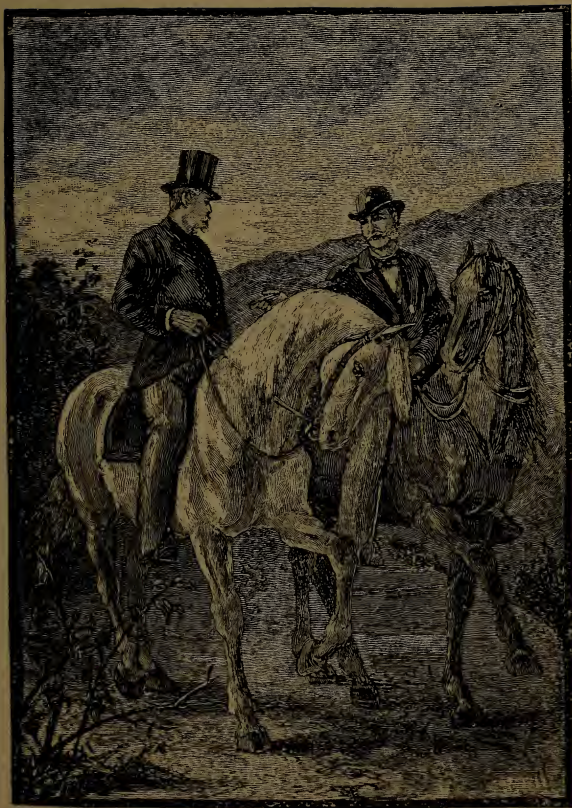
Having sent for his guide,
He order'd his horse, and determined to ride
Back forthwith to Bigorre.
Then, the guide, who well knew

Every haunt of those hills, said the wild lake
of Oo
Lay a league from Serchon; and suggested a
track
By the lake to Bigorre, which, transversing the
back
Of the mountain, avoided a circuit between
Two long valleys; and thinking, "Perchance
change of scene
May create change of thought," Alfred Var-
grave agreed,
Mounted horse, and set forth to Bigorre at full
speed.

IV.

His guide rode beside him.

The king of the guides!
The gallant Bernard! ever boldly he rides,
Ever gayly he sings! For to him, from of old,
The hills have confided their secrets, and told
Where the white partridge lies, and the cock
o' the woods;
Where the izard flits fine through the cold sol-
itudes;
Where the bear lurks perdu; and the lynx on
his prey
At nightfall descends, when the mountains are
gray;
Where the sassafras blooms, and the blue-bell
is born,
And the wild rhododendron first reddens at
morn;
Where the source of the waters is fine as a
thread;



“ ‘ Pray take a cigar.’ ”—Page 42.

Lucile.

How the storm on the wild Maladetta is
 spread;
 Where the thunder is hoarded, the snows lie
 asleep,
 Whence the torrents are fed, and the cataracts
 leap;
 And, familiarly known in the hamlets, the
 vales
 Have whisper'd to him all their thousand love
 tales;
 He has laugh'd with the girls, he has leap'd
 with the boys;
 Ever blithe, ever bold, ever boon, he enjoys
 An existence untroubled by envy or strife,
 While he feeds on the dews and the juices of
 life,
 And so lightly he sings, and so gayly he rides,
 For Bernard le Sauteur is the king of all guides!

v.

But Bernard found, that day, neither song nor
 love-tale,
 Nor adventure, nor laughter, nor legend avail
 To arouse from his deep and profound reverie
 Him that silent beside him rode fast as could
 be.

vi.

Ascending the mountain they slacken'd their
 pace,
 And the marvelous prospect each moment
 changed face.
 The breezy and pure inspirations of morn

Breathed about them. The scrap'd, ravaged
 mountains, all worn
 By the torrents, whose course they watched
 faintly meander,
 Were alive with the diamonded shy salamander.
 They paused o'er the bosom of purple abysses,
 And wound through a region of green wilder-
 nesses;
 The waters went whirling above and around,
 The forests hung heap'd in their shadows pro-
 found,
 Here the Larboust, and there Aventin, Castel-
 lon,
 Which the Demon of Tempest, descending
 upon,
 Had wasted with fire; and the peaceful Cazeaux
 They mark'd, and far down in the sunshine
 below,
 Half dipp'd in a valley of airiest blue,
 The white happy homes of the village of Oo,
 Where the age is yet golden.

And high overhead
 The wrecks of the combat of Titans were
 spread.
 Red granite and quartz, in the alchemic sun,
 Fused their splendors of crimson and crystal
 in one;
 And deep in the moss gleam'd the delicate
 shells,
 And the dew linger'd fresh in the heavy hare-
 bells;
 The large violet burn'd; the campanula blue;
 And Autumn's own flower, the saffron, peer'd
 through

The red-berried brambles and thick sassafras;
And fragrant with thyme was the delicate
grass;

And high up, and higher, and highest of all,
The secular phantom of snow!

O'er the wall
Of a gray sunless glen gaping drowsy below,
That aerial specter, reveal'd in the glow
Of the great golden dawn, hovers faint on the
eye,

And appears to grow in, and grow out of the
sky,

And plays with the fancy, and baffles the sight.

Only reach'd by the vast rosy ripple of light,

And the cool star of eve, the Imperial Thing,

Half unreal, like some mythological king

That dominates all in a fable of old,

Takes command of a valley as fair to behold

As aught in old fables; and, seen or unseen,

Dwells aloof over all, in the vast and serene

Sacred sky, where the footsteps of spirits are
furl'd

'Mid the clouds beyond which spreads the infin-
ite world

Of man's last aspirations, unfathom'd, untrod,

Save by Even and Morn, and the angels of
God.

VII.

Meanwhile, as they journey'd, that serpentine
road,

Now abruptly reversed, unexpectedly show'd
A gay cavalcade some few feet in advance.

Alfred Vargrave's heart beat; for he saw at a
 glance
 The slight form of Lucile in the midst. His
 next look
 Show'd him, joyously ambling beside her, the
 Duke.
 The rest of the troop which had thus caught
 his ken
 He knew not, nor noticed them (women and
 men).
 They were laughing and talking together.
 Soon after
 His sudden appearance suspended their laugh-
 ter.

VIII.

“You here! . . . I imagined you far on your
 way
 To Bigorre!” . . . said Lucile. “What has
 caused you to stay?”
 “I am on my way to Bigorre,” he replied,
 “But, since my way would seem to be yours,
 let me ride
 For one moment beside you.” And then, with
 a stoop
 At her ear, . . . “and forgive me!”

IX.

By this time the troop
 Had regather'd its numbers.
 Lucile was as pale
 As the cloud 'neath their feet, on its way to
 the vale.

The Duke had observed it, nor quitted her side,
 For even one moment, the whole of the ride.
 Alfred smiled as he thought, "he is jealous of
 her!"

And the thought of his jealousy added a spur
 To his firm resolution and effort to please.
 He talked much; was witty, and quite at his
 ease.

x.

After noontide, the clouds, which had traversed
 the east

Half the day, gather'd closer, and rose and
 increased.

The air changed and chill'd. As though out
 of the ground

There ran up the trees a confused hissing sound,
 And the wind rose. The guides sniffed, like
 chamois, the air,

And look'd at each other, and halted, and there
 Unbuckled the cloaks from the saddles. The
 white

Aspens rustled, and turn'd up their frail leaves
 in fright.

All announced the approach of the tempest.

Ere long,
 Thick darkness descended the mountains
 among;

And a vivid, vindictive, and serpentine flash
 Gored the darkness, and shore it across with a
 gash.

The rain fell in large heavy drops. And anon
 Broke the thunder.

The horses took fright, everyone.
 The Duke's in a moment was far out of sight.
 The guides whoop'd. The band was obliged
 to alight;
 And, dispersed up the perilous pathway,
 walk'd blind
 To the darkness before from the darkness
 behind.

XI.

And the Storm is abroad in the mountains!
He fills
 The crouch'd hollows and all the oracular hills
 With dread voices of power. A roused million
 or more
 Of wild echoes reluctantly rise from their hoary
 Immemorial ambush, and roll in the wake
 Of the cloud, whose reflection leaves vivid the
 lake.
 And the wind, that wild robber, for plunder
 descends
 From invisible lands, o'er those black moun-
 tain ends;
 He howls as he hounds down his prey; and his
 lash
 Tears the hair of the timorous wan mountain
 ash,
 That clings to the rocks, with her garments all
 torn,
 Like a woman in fear; then he blows his hoarse
 horn
 And is off the fierce guide of destruction and
 terror,

Up the desolate heights, 'mid an intricate error
Of mountain and mist.

XII.

There is war in the skies
Lo! the black-winged legions of tempest arise
O'er those sharp splinter'd rocks that are
gleaming below
In the soft light, so fair and so fatal, as though
Some seraph burn'd through them, the thun-
der-bolt searching
Which the black cloud unbosom'd just now.
Lo! the lurching
And shivering pine-trees, like phantoms, that
seem
To waver above, in the dark; and yon stream,
How it hurries and roars, on its way to the
white
And paralyzed lake there, appall'd at the sight
Of the things seen in heaven!

XIII.

Through the darkness and awe
That had gather'd around him, Lord Alfred
now saw
Reveal'd in the fierce and evanishing glare
Of the lightning that momentarily pulsed through
the air,
A woman alone on a shelf of the hill,
With her cheeks coldly propped on her hand,—
and as still
As the rock that she sat on, which beetled
above

The black lake beneath her.

All terror, all love,
Added speed to the instinct with which he
rush'd on.

For one moment the blue lightning swathed
the whole stone

In its lurid embrace: like the sleek dazzling
snake

That encircles a sorceress charm'd for her sake
And lull'd by her loveliness; fawning, it play'd
And caressingly twined round the feet and the
head

Of the woman who sat there, undaunted and
calm

As the soul of that solitude, listing the psalm
Of the plangent and laboring tempest roll slow
From the caldron of midnight and vapor
below,

Next moment from bastion to bastion, all
around,

Of the siege-circled mountains, there tumbled
the sound

Of the battering thunder's indefinite peal,
And Lord Alfred had sprung to the feet of
Lucile.

XIV.

She started. Once more, with its flickering
wand,

The lightning approach'd her. In terror, her
hand

Alfred Vargrave had seized within his; and he
felt

The light fingers that coldly and lingering
dwelt

In the grasp of his own, tremble faintly.

“See! See!

Where the whirlwind hath stricken and
strangled yon tree!”

She exclaim’d, . . . “like the passion that
brings on its breath,

To the being it embraces, destruction and
death!

Alfred Vargrave, the lightning is around you!”

“Lucile!

I hear — I see — naught but yourself. I can
feel

Nothing here but your presence. My pride
fights in vain

With the truth that leaps from me. We two
meet again

’Neath yon terrible heaven that is watching
above

To avenge if I lie when I swear that I love,—
And beneath yonder terrible heaven, at your
feet

I humble my head and my heart. I entreat
Your pardon, Lucile, for the past—I implore
For the future your mercy—implore it with
more

Of passion than prayer ever breathed. By the
power

Which invisibly touches us both in this hour,
By the rights I have o’er you, Lucile, I de-
mand—”

“The rights!” . . . said Lucile, and drew
from him her hand.

"Yes, the rights! for what greater to man
 may belong
 Than the right to repair in the future the
 wrong
 To the past? and the wrong I have done you,
 of yore,
 Hath bequeath'd to me all the sad right to
 restore,
 To retrieve, to amend! I, who injured your
 life
 Urge the right to repair it, Lucile! Be my
 wife.
 My guide, my good angel, my all upon earth,
 And accept, for the sake of what yet may give
 worth
 To my life, its contrition!"

xv.

He paused, for there came
 O'er the cheek of Lucile a swift flush like the
 flame
 That illumined at moments the darkness o'er-
 head.
 With a voice faint and marr'd by emotion, she
 said,
 "And your pledge to another?"

xvi.

"Hush, hush!" he exclaim'd,
 "My honor will live where my love lives, un-
 shamed.
 'Twere poor honor indeed, to another to give
 That life of which you keep the heart. Could
 I live

In the light of those young eyes, suppressing
a lie?

Alas, no! your hand holds my whole destiny.
I can never recall what my lips have avow'd;
In your love lies whatever can render me
proud,

For the great crime of all my existence hath
been

To have known you in vain. And the duty
best seen,

And most hallow'd—the duty most sacred and
sweet

Is that which hath led me, Lucile, to your
feet.

O speak! and restore me the blessing I lost
When I lost you—my pearl of all pearls beyond
cost!

And restore to your own life its youth, and
restore

The vision, the rapture, the passion of yore!
Ere our brows had been dimm'd in the dust of
the world,

When our souls their white wings yet exulting
unfurl'd!

For your eyes rest no more on the unquiet
man,

The wild star of whose course its pale orbit
outran.

Whom the formless indefinite future of youth,
With its lying allurements, distracted. In
truth

I have wearily wander'd the world, and I feel
That the least of your lovely regards, O Lu-
cile,

Is worth all the world can afford, and the
 dream
 Which, though follow'd forever, forever doth
 seem
 As fleeting, and distant, and dim, as of yore
 When it brooded in twilight, at dawn, on the
 shore
 Of life's untraversed ocean! I know the sole
 path
 To repose, which my desolate destiny hath,
 Is the path by whose course to your feet I
 return.
 And who else, O Lucile, will so truly discern,
 And so deeply revere, all the passionate
 strength,
 The sublimity in you, as he whom at length
 These have saved from himself, for the truth
 they reveal
 To his worship?"

XVII.

She spoke not; but Alfred could feel
 The light hand and arm, that upon him re-
 posed,
 Thrill and tremble. Those dark eyes of hers
 were half closed.
 But, under their languid mysterious fringe,
 A passionate softness was beaming. One
 tinge
 Of faint inward fire flush'd transparently
 through
 The delicate, pallid, and pure olive hue
 Of the cheek, half averted and droop'd. The
 rich bosom

Heaved, as when in the heart of a ruffled rose-
blossom
A bee is imprison'd and struggles.

XVIII.

Meanwhile

The sun, in his setting, sent up the last smile
Of his power, to baffle the storm. And behold!
O'er the mountains embattled, his armies, all
gold,
Rose and rested; while far up the dim airy
crag,
Its artillery silenced, its banners in rags,
The rear of the tempest its sullen retreat
Drew off slowly, receding in silence, to meet
The powers of the night, which, now gathering
afar,
Had already sent forward one bright, signal
star.

The curls of her soft and luxuriant hair,
From the dark riding-hat, which Lucile used
to wear,
Had escaped; and Lord Alfred now cover'd
with kisses
The redolent warmth of those long falling tres-
ses.

Neither he, nor Lucile, felt the rain, which
not yet
Had ceased falling around them; when,
splash'd, drench'd, and wet,
The Duc de Luvois down the rough mountain
course
Approached them as fast as the road, and his
horse

Which was limping, would suffer. The beast
had just now
Lost his footing, and over the perilous brow
Of the storm-haunted mountain his master had
thrown;
But the Duke, who was agile, had leap'd to a
stone,
And the horse, being bred to the instinct which
fills
The breast of the wild mountaineer in these
hills,
Had scrambled again to his feet; and now
master
And horse bore about them the signs of disaster,
As they heavily footed their way through the
mist,
The horse with his shoulder, the Duke with his
wrist,
Bruised and bleeding.

XIX.

If ever your feet, like my own,
O, reader, have traversed these mountains
alone,
Have you felt your identity shrink and contract
At the sound of the distant and dim catátract,
In the presence of nature's immensities? Say,
Have you hung o'er the torrent, bedew'd with
its spray,
And, leaving the rock-way, contorted and
roll'd,
Like a huge couchant Typhon, fold heap'd over
fold,

Track'd the summits from which every step
that you tread
Rolls the loose stones, with thunder below, to
the bed
Of invisible waters, whose mystical sound
Fills with awful suggestions the dizzy pro-
found?
And, laboring onwards, at last through a break
In the walls of the world, burst at once on the
lake?
If you have, this description I might have
withheld.
You remember how strangely your bosom has
swell'd
At the vision reveal'd. On the overwork'd soil
Of this planet, enjoyment is sharpen'd by toil;
And one seems, by the pain of ascending the
height,
To have conquer'd a claim of that wonderful
sight.

xx.

Hail, virginal daughter of cold Espingo!
Hail, Naiad, whose realm is the cloud and the
snow;
For o'er thee the angels have whiten'd their
wings,
And the thirst of the seraphs is quench'd at thy
springs.
What hand hath, in heaven, upheld thine ex-
panse?
When the breath of creation first fashion'd fair
France,
Did the Spirit of Ill in his downthrow appalling,

Bruise the world, and thus hollow thy basin
 while falling?
 Ere the mammoth was born hath some monster
 unnamed
 The base of thy mountainous pedestal framed?
 And later, when Power to Beauty was wed,
 Did some delicate fairy embroider thy bed
 With the fragile valerian and wild columbine?

XXI.

But the secret thou keepest, and I will keep
 mine;
 For once gazing on thee, it flash'd on my soul,
 All that secret! I saw in a vision the whole
 Vast design of the ages; what was and shall be!
 Hands unseen raised the veil of a great mystery
 For one moment. I saw, and I heard; and my
 heart
 Bore witness within me to infinite art,
 In infinite power proving infinite love;
 Caught the great choral chant, mark'd the
 dread pageant move—
 The divine Whence and Whither of life! But,
 O daughter
 Of Oo, not more safe in the deep silent water
 Is thy secret, than mine in my heart. Even so.
 What I then saw and heard, the world never
 shall know.

XXII.

The dimness of eve o'er the valleys had closed,
 The rain had ceased falling, the mountains re-
 posed.
 The stars had enkindled in luminous courses

Their slow-sliding lamps, when, remounting
 their horses,
 The riders retraversed that mighty serration
 Of rock-work. Thus left to its own desolation,
 The lake, from whose glimmering limits the
 last
 Transient pomp of the pageants of sunset had
 pass'd,
 Drew into its bosom the darkness, and only
 Admitted within it one image—a lonely
 And tremulous phantom of flickering light
 That follow'd the mystical moon through the
 night.

XXIII.

It was late when o'er Serchon at last they des-
 cended,
 To her chalet, in silence, Lord Alfred attended
 Lucile. As they parted, she whispered him
 low,
 "You have made to me, Alfred, an offer I know
 All the worth of, believe me. I cannot reply
 Without time for reflection. Good-night!—not
 good-by."
 "Alas! 'tis the very same answer you made
 To the Duc de Luvois but a day since," he
 said.
 "No, Alfred! the very same, no," she replied;
 Her voice shook. "If you love me, obey me.
 Abide
 My answer, to-morrow."

XXIV.

Alas, Cousin Jack!

You Cassandra in breeches and boots! turn your
back
To the ruins of Troy. Prophet, seek not for
glory
Amongst thine own people.
I follow my story.

CANTO V.

I.

Up!—forth again, Pegasus! — “Many’s the
slip,”
Hath the proverb well said, “twixt the cup and
the lip!”
How blest should we be, have I often con-
ceived,
Had we really achieved what we nearly
achieved!
We but catch at the skirts of the thing we
would be,
And fall back on the lap of a false destiny.
So it will be, so has been, since this world be-
gan!
And the happiest, noblest, and best part of
man
Is the part which he never hath fully play’d
out:
For the first and last word in life’s volume is
—Doubt
The face the most fair to our vision allow’d

Is the face we encounter and lose in the crowd,
The thought that most thrills our existence is
one

Which, before we can frame it in language, is
gone.

O Horace! the rustic still rests by the river,
But the river flows on, and flows past him for-
ever!

Who can sit down, and say . . . "What I will
be, I will?"

Who stand up, and affirm . . . "What I was,
I am still?"

Who is it that must not, if question'd, say . . .
"What

I would have remain'd or become, I am not?"

We are ever behind, or beyond, or beside

Our intrinsic existence. Forever at hide

And seek with our souls. Not in Hades alone

Doth Sisyphus roll, ever frustrate, the stone,

Do the Danaids ply, ever vainly, the sieve.

Tasks as futile does earth to its denizens give.

Yet there's none so unhappy, but what he hath
been

Just about to be happy, at some time, I ween;

And none so beguiled and defrauded by
chance,

But what once in his life, some minute circum-
stance

Would have fully sufficed to secure him the
bliss

Which, missing it then, he forever must miss.

And to most of us, ere we go down to the grave,

Life, relenting, accords the good gift we would
have;

But, as though by some strange imperfection
in fate,

The good gift, when it comes, comes a moment
too late.

The Future's great veil our breath fitfully flaps,
And behind it broods ever the mighty Perhaps.
Yet! there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the
lip;

But while o'er the brim of life's beaker I dip,
Though the cup may next moment be shat-
ter'd, the wine

Spilt, one deep health I'll pledge, and that
health shall be thine,

O being of beauty and bliss! seen and known
In the depths of my soul, and possess'd there
alone!

My days know thee not; and my lips name thee
never,

Thy place in my poor life is vacant forever.

We have met; we have parted. No more is
recorded

In my annals on earth. This alone was ac-
corded

To the man whom men know me, or deem me,
to be.

But, far down, in the depth of my life's mys-
tery,

(Like the siren that under the deep ocean
dwells,

Whom the wind as it wails, and the wave as it
swells,

Cannot stir in the calm of her coraline halls,
'Mid the world's adamantine and dim pedes-
tals;

At whose feet sit the sylphs and sea fairies;
for whom

The almondine glimmers, the soft samphires
bloom)—

Thou abidest and reignest forever, O Queen
Of that better world which thou swayest un-
seen!

My one perfect mistress! my all things in all!
Thee by no vulgar name known to men do I
call:

For the Seraphs have named thee to me in my
sleep,

And that name is a secret I sacredly keep.
But, wherever this nature of mine is most fair,
And its thoughts are the purest—belov'd,
thou are there!

And whatever is noblest in aught that I do,
Is done to exalt and to worship thee too.

The world gave thee not to me, no! and the
world

Cannot take thee away from me now. I have
furl'd

The wings of my spirit about thy bright head;
At thy feet are my soul's immortalities spread.
Thou mightest have been to me much. Thou
art more.

And in silence I worship, in darkness adore.

If life be not that which, without us, we find
Chance, accident, merely—but rather the mind,
And the soul which, within us, surviveth these
things,

If our real existence have truly its springs
Less in that which we do than in that which
we feel,

Not in vain do I worship, not hopeless I kneel!
 For then, though I name thee not mistress or
 wife,
 Thou art mine—and mine only, O life of my
 life!
 And though many's the slip 'twixt the cup and
 the lip,
 Yet while o'er the brim of life's beaker I dip,
 While there's life on the lip, while there's
 warmth in the wine,
 One deep health I'll pledge, and that health
 shall be thine!

II.

This world, on whose peaceable breast we re-
 pose
 Unconvulsed by alarm, once confused in the
 throes
 Of a tumult divine, sea and land, moist and
 dry,
 And in fiery fusion commix'd earth and sky.
 Time cool'd it, and calm'd it, and taught it to
 go
 The round of its orbit in peace, long ago.
 The wind changeth and whirleth continually:
 All the rivers run down and run into the sea:
 The wind whirleth about, and is presently
 still'd:
 All the rivers run down, yet the sea is not fill'd:
 The sun goeth forth from his chambers: the
 sun
 Ariseth, and lo ! he descendeth anon.
 All returns to its place. Use and Habit are
 powers

Far stronger than Passion, in this world of
ours.

The great laws of life readjust their infraction,
And to every emotion appoint a reaction.

III.

Alfred Vargrave had time, after leaving
Lucile,

To review the rash step he had taken, and feel
What the world would have called "his erro-
neous position."

Thought obruded its claim, and enforced
recognition:

Like a creditor who, when the gloss is worn
out

On the coat which we once wore with pleasure,
no doubt,

Sends us in his account for the garment we
bought.

Ev'ry spendthrift to passion is debtor to
thought.

IV.

He felt ill at ease with himself. He could feel
Little doubt what the answer would be from
Lucile.

Her eyes when they parted—her voice, when
they met,

Still enraptured his heart, which they haunted,
and yet

Though, exulting, he deem'd himself loved,
where he loved,

Through his mind a vague self-accusation there
moved.

O'er his fancy, when fancy was fairest, would
rise

The infantine face of Matilda, with eyes
So sad, so reproachful, so cruelly kind,
That his heart fail'd within him. In vain did
he find

A thousand just reasons for what he had done:
The vision that troubled him would not be gone.
In vain did he say to himself, and with truth,
"Matilda has beauty, and fortune, and youth;
And her heart is too young to have deeply in-
volved

All its hopes in the tie which must now be dis-
solved,

'Twere a false sense of honor in me to sup-
press

The sad truth which I owe it to her to confess.
And what reason have I to presume this poor
life

Of my own, with its languid and frivolous strife,
And without what alone might endear it to her,
Were a boon all so precious, indeed, to confer,
Its withdrawal can wrong her?

It is not as though

I were bound to some poor village maiden, I
know,

Unto whose simple heart mine were all upon
earth,

Or to whose simple fortunes my own could give
worth.

Matilda, in all the world's gifts, will not miss
Aught that I could procure her. 'Tis best as
it is!"

v.

In vain did he say to himself, "When I came
To this fatal spot, I had nothing to blame
Or reproach myself for, in the thoughts of my
heart.

I could not foresee that its pulses would start
Into such strange emotion on seeing once more
A woman I left with indifference before.

I believed, and with honest conviction believed,
In my love for Matilda. I never conceived
That another could shake it. I deem'd I had
done

With the wild heart of youth, and looked hope-
fully on

To the soberer manhood, the worthier life,
Which I sought in the love that I vow'd to my
wife.

Poor child! she shall learn the whole truth.
She shall know

What I knew not myself but a few days ago.
The world will console her—her pride will
support—

Her youth will renew its emotions. In short,
There is nothing in me that Matilda will miss
When once we have parted. 'Tis best as it
is!"

vi.

But in vain did he reason and argue. Alas!
He yet felt unconvinced that 'twas best as it
was.

Out of reach of all reason, forever would rise
That infantine face of Matilda, with eyes

So sad, so reproachful, so cruelly kind,
That they harrow'd his heart and distracted
his mind.

VII.

And then, when he turned from these thoughts
to Lucile,
Though his heart rose enraptured he could not
but feel

A vague sense of awe of her nature. Behind
All the beauty of heart, and the graces of mind,
Which he saw and revered in her, something
unknown

And unseen in that nature still troubled his
own.

He felt that Lucile penetrated and prized
Whatever was noblest and best, though dis-
guised,

In himself; but he did not feel sure that he
knew,

Or completely possess'd, what, half hidden
from view,

Remain'd lofty and lonely in her.

Then, her life,
So untamed, and so free! would she yield as a
wife,

Independence, long claimed as a woman? Her
name,

So link'd by the world with that spurious fame
Which the beauty and wit of a woman assert,
In some measure, alas! to her own loss and
hurt

In the serious thoughts of a man! . . . This
reflection

O'er the love which he felt cast a shade of
dejection,
From which he forever escaped to the thought
Doubt could reach not . . . "I love her, and
all else is naught!

VIII.

His hand trembled strangely in breaking the
seal
Of the letter which reach'd him at last from
Lucile.
At the sight of the very first words that he
read,
That letter dropp'd down from his hand like
the dead
Leaf in autumn, that, falling, leaves naked
and bare
A desolate tree in a wide wintry air.
He pass'd his hand hurriedly over his eyes,
Bewilder'd, incredulous. Angry surprise
And dismay in one sharp moan, broke from
him, Anon
He pick'd up the page and read rapidly on

IX.

THE COMTESSE DE NEVERS TO LORD ALFRED
VARGRAVE:

"No, Alfred!

If over the present, when last
We two met, rose the glamour and mist of the
past,
It hath now rolled away, and our two paths are
plain,

And those two paths divide us.

“That hand which again
Mine one moment has clasp'd as the hand of a
brother,

That hand and your honor are pledged to
another!

Forgive, Alfred Vargrave, forgive me, if yet
For that moment (now past!) I have made you
forget

What was due to yourself and that other one.

Yes,

Mine the fault, and be mine the repentance.

Not less,

In now owning this fault, Alfred, let me own,
too,

I foresaw not the sorrow involved in it.

“True,
That meeting, which hath been so fatal, I
sought,

I alone! But, oh, deem not it was with the
thought

Of your heart to regain, or the past to awaken.

No! believe me, it was with the firm and
unshaken

Conviction, at least, that our meeting would
be

Without peril to you, although haply to me

The salvation of all my existence.

“I own,
When the rumor first reach'd me, which lightly
made known

To the world your engagement, my heart and
my mind

Suffer'd torture intense. It was cruel to find

That so much of the life of my life, half
unknown

To myself, had been silently settled on one
Upon whom but to think it would soon be a
crime.

Then I said to myself, 'From the thralldom
which time

Hath not weaken'd there rests but one hope of
escape.

That image which Fancy seems ever to shape
From the solitude left round the ruins of yore,
Is a phantom. The Being I loved is no more.
What I hear in the silence, and see in the lone
Void of life, is the young hero born of my own
Perish'd youth: and his image, serene and
sublime,

In my heart rests unconscious of change and
of time

Could I see it but once more, as time and as
change

Have made it, a thing unfamiliar and strange,
See, indeed, that the Being I loved in my youth
Is no more, and what rests now is only, in
truth,

The hard pupil of life and the world: then,
oh, then,

I should wake from a dream, and my life be
again

Reconciled to the world; and, released from
regret,

Take the lot fate accords to my choice.'

“So we met

But the danger I did not foresee has occur'd;
The danger, alas, to yourself! I have err'd.

But happy for both that this error hath been
Discover'd as soon as the danger was seen!

We meet, Alfred Vargrave, no more. I,
indeed,

Shall be far from Serchon when this letter you
read.

My course is decided; my path I discern:
Doubt is over; my future is fix'd now.

“Return,
O return to the young living love! Whence,
alas!

If, one moment, you wander'd, think only it
was

More deeply to bury the past love.

“And, oh!
Believe, Alfred Vargrave, that I, where I go
On my far distant pathway through life, shall
rejoice

To treasure in memory all that your voice
Has avow'd to me, all in which others have
clothed

To my fancy with beauty and worth your
betrothed!

In the fair morning light, in the orient dew
Of that young life, now yours, can you fail to
renew

All the noble and pure aspirations, the truth,
The freshness, the faith, of your own earnest
youth?

Yes! you will be happy. I, too, in the bliss
I foresee for you, I shall be happy. And this
Proves me worthy your friendship. And so—
let it prove

That I cannot—I do not—respond to your love.

Yes, indeed! be convinced that I could not
(no, no,
Never, never!) have render'd you happy.
And so,
Rest assured that, if false to the vows you
have plighted,
You would have endured, when the first brief,
excited
Emotion was o'er, not alone the remorse
Of honor, but also (to render it worse)
Disappointed affection.

“Yes, Alfred; you start?

But think! if the world was too much in your
heart,
And too little in mine, when we parted ten
years
Ere this last fatal meeting, that time (ay, and
tears!)
Have but deepen'd the old demarcations
which then
Placed our natures asunder; and we two again,
As we then were, would still have been
strangely at strife.
In that self-independence which is to my life
Its necessity now, as it once was its pride,
Had our course through the world been hence-
forth side by side,
I should have revolted forever, and shock'd
Your respect for the world's plausibilities,
mock'd,
Without meaning to do so, and outraged, all
those
Social creeds which you live by.

“Oh! do not suppose

That I blame you. Perhaps it is you that are
right.

Best, then, all as it is!

“Deem these words life’s Good-night
To the hope of a moment: no more! If there
fell

Any tear on this page, ’twas a friend’s.

“So farewell
To the past—and to you, Alfred Vargrave.

“LUCILE.”

x.

So ended that letter.

The room seem’d to reel
Round and round in the mist that was scorch-
ing his eyes

With a fiery dew. Grief, resentment, surprise,
Half choked him; each word he had read, as
it smote

Down some hope, rose and grasped like a
hand at his throat

To stifle and strangle him.

Gasping already
For relief from himself, with a footstep
unsteady,

He pass’d from his chamber. He felt both
oppress’d

And excited. The letter he thrust in his breast,
And, in search of fresh air and of solitude,
pass’d

The long lime-trees of Serchon. His footsteps
at last

Reach’d a bare narrow heath by the skirts of a
wood:

It was somber and silent, and suited his mood.
 By a mineral spring, long unused, now un-
 known,
 Stood a small ruin'd abbey. He reach'd it,
 sat down
 On a fragment of stone, 'mid the wild weed
 and thistle
 And read over again that perplexing epistle.

XI.

In re-reading that letter, there roll'd from his
 mind
 The raw mist of resentment which first made
 him blind
 To the pathos breath'd through it. Tears rose
 in his eyes,
 And a hope sweet and strange in his heart
 seem'd to rise.
 The truth which he saw not the first time he
 read
 That letter, he now saw—that each word
 betray'd
 The love which the writer had sought to con-
 ceal.
 His love was received not, he could not but feel,
 For one reason alone,—that his love was not
 free.
 True! free yet he was not: but could he not
 be
 Free erelong, free as air to revoke that fare-
 well,
 And to sanction his own hopes? he had but to
 tell
 The truth to Matilda, and she were the first

To release him: he had but to wait at the
worst.

Matilda's relations would probably snatch
Any pretext, with pleasure, to break off a
match

In which they had yielded, alone at the whim
Of their spoil'd child, a languid approval to
him.

She herself, careless child! was her love for
him aught

Save the first joyous fancy succeeding the
thought

She last gave to her doll? was she able to feel
Such a love as the love he divined in Lucile?

He would seek her, obtain his release, and, oh!
then,

He had but to fly to Lucile, and again
Claim the love which his heart would be free
to command.

But to press on Lucile any claim to her hand,
Or even to seek, or to see her, before

He could say, "I am free; free, Lucile, to im-
plore

That great blessing on life you alone can con-
fer,"

'Twere dishonor in him, 'twould be insult to
her.

Thus still with the letter outspread on his
knee

He follow'd so fondly his own revery,
That he felt not the angry regard of a man
Fix'd upon him; he saw not a face stern and
wan

Turn'd toward him; he heard not a footstep
 that pass'd
 And repass'd the lone spot where he stood, till
 at last
 A hoarse voice aroused him.

He look'd up and saw,
 On the bare heath before him, the Duc de
 Luvois.

XII.

With aggressive ironical tones, and a look
 Of concentrated insolent challenge, the Duke
 Addressed to Lord Alfred some sneering allu-
 sion
 To "the doubtless sublime reveries his intru-
 sion
 Had, he fear'd, interrupted. Milord would do
 better,
 He fancied, however, to fold up a letter
 The writing of which was too well known, in
 fact,
 His remark as he pass'd to have failed to
 attract."

XIII.

It was obvious to Alfred the Frenchman was
 bent
 Upon picking a quarrel! and doubtless 'twas
 meant
 From him to provoke it by sneers such as these.
 A moment sufficed his quick instinct to seize
 The position. He felt that he could not expose
 His own name, or Lucile's, or Matilda's, to
 those

Idle tongues that would bring down upon him
the ban

Of the world, if he now were to fight with this
man.

And indeed when he look'd in the Duke's hag-
gard face

He was pain'd by the change there he could
not but trace.

And he almost felt pity.

He therefore put by

Each remark of the Duke with some careless
reply,

And coldly, but courteously, waving away
The ill-humor the Duke seem'd resolved to
display,

Rose, and turn'd, with a stern salutation, aside.

XIV.

Then the Duke put himself in the path, made
one stride

In advance, raised a hand, fixed upon him his
eyes,

And said . . .

“Hold, Lord Alfred! Away with disguise!

I will own that I sought you a moment ago,

To fix on you a quarrel. I still can do so

Upon my excuse. I prefer to be frank.

I admit not a rival in fortune or rank

To the hand of a woman, whatever be hers

Or her suitor's. I love the Comtesse de Nevers.

I believed, ere you cross'd me, and still have
the right

To believe, that she would have been mine.

To her sight

You return, and the woman is suddenly
changed.

You step in between us: her heart is estranged.
You! who now are betrothed to another, I
know;

You! whose name with Lucile's nearly ten
years ago

Was coupled by ties which you broke: you!
the man

I reproach'd on the day our acquaintance
began.

You! that left her so lightly,—I cannot believe
That you love, as I love, her; nor can I con-
ceive

You, indeed, have the right so to love her.

Milord,

I will not thus tamely concede, at your word,
What, a few days ago, I believed to be mine!
I shall yet persevere: I shall yet be, in fine,
A rival you dare not despise. It is plain
That to settle this contest there can but remain
One way—need I say what it is?"

xv.

Not unmoved
With regretful respect for the earnestness
proved

By the speech he had heard, Alfred Vargrave
replied

In words which he trusted might yet turn aside
The quarrel from which he felt bound to
abstain,

And, with stately urbanity, strove to explain

To the Duke that he too (a fair rival at worst!)
Had not been accepted.

XVI.

“Accepted! say first
Are you free to have offer’d?”

Lord Alfred was mute.

XVII.

“Ah, you dare not reply!” cried the Duke,
“Why dispute,
Why palter with me? You are silent! and
why?”

Because, in your conscience, you cannot deny
’Twas from the vanity, wanton and cruel
withal,

And the wish and ascendancy lost to recall,
That you stepp’d in between me and her. If,
milord,

You be really sincere, I ask only one word.
Say at once you renounce her. At once on
my part,

I will ask your forgiveness with all truth of
heart,

And there can be no quarrel between us. Say
on!”

Lord Alfred grew gall’d and impatient. This
tone

Roused a strong irritation he could not repress.
“You have not the right, sir,” he said, “and
still less

The power, to make terms and conditions with
me.

I refuse to reply.”

XVIII.

As diviners may see
 Fates they cannot avert in some figure occult,
 He foresaw in a moment each evil result
 Of the quarrel now imminent.

There, face to face,
 Mid the ruins and tombs of a long-perish'd
 race,
 With, for witness, the stern Autumn Sky over-
 head,
 And beneath them, unnoticed, the graves, and
 the dead,
 Those two men had met, as it were on the
 ridge
 Of that perilous, narrow, invisible bridge
 Dividing the Past from the Future, so small
 That if one should pass over, the other must
 fall.

XIX.

On the ear, at that moment, the sound of a
 hoof,
 Urged with speed, sharply smote; and from
 under the roof
 Of the forest in view, where the skirts of it
 verged
 On the heath where they stood, at full gallop
 emerged
 A horseman.

A guide appear'd, by the sash
 Of red silk round the waist, and the long
 leathern lash

With the short wooden handle, slung crosswise
 behind
 The short jacket; the loose canvas trouser,
 confined
 By the long boots; the woolen capote; and
 the rein,
 A mere hempen cord on a curb.

Up the plain
 He wheel'd his horse, white with the foam on
 his flank,
 Leap'd the rivulet lightly, turn'd sharp from
 the bank,
 And, approaching the Duke, raised his woolen
 capote,
 Bow'd low in the selle, and deliver'd a note. .

xx.

The two stood astonish'd. The Duke, with a
 gest
 Of apology, turn'd, stretch'd his hand and pos-
 sess'd
 Himself of the letter, changed color, and tore
 The page open and read.

Ere a moment was o'er
 His whole aspect changed. A light rose to his
 eyes,
 And a smile to his lips. While with startled
 surprise
 Lord Alfred yet watch'd him, he turn'd on his
 heel,
 And said gayly, "A pressing request from
 Lucile!
 You are quite right, Lord Alfred! fair rivals
 at worst,

Our relative place may perchance be reversed.
 You are not accepted,—nor free to propose!
 I, perchance, am accepted already: who knows?
 I had warn'd you, milord, I should still perse-
 vere.

This letter—but stay! you can read it—look
 here!"

XXI.

It was now Alfred's turn to feel roused and
 enraged.

But Lucile to himself was not pledged or en-
 gaged

By aught that could sanction resentment. He
 said

Not a word, but turn'd round, took the letter,
 and read . . .

THE COMTESSE DE NEVERS TO THE DUC DE LUVOIS.

“SAINT SAVIOUR.

“Your letter, which follow'd me here, makes
 me stay

Till I see you again. With no moment's delay
 I entreat, I conjure you, by all that you feel
 Or profess, to come to me directly.

LUCILE.”

XXII.

“Your letter!” He then had been writing to
 her!

Coldly shrugging his shoulders, Lord Alfred
 said, “Sir,

Do not let me detain you!"

The Duke smiled and bow'd;
Placed the note in his bosom; address'd, half
aloud,
A few words to the messenger. . . . "Say your
dispatch
Will be answer'd ere nightfall;" then glanced
at his watch,
And turn'd back to the Baths.

XXIII.

Alfred Vargrave stood still,
Torn, distracted in heart, and divided in will.
He turn'd to Lucile's farewell letter to him,
And read over her words; rising tears made
them dim;
"Doubt is over: my future is fix'd now," they
said,
"My course is decided." Her course? what!
to wed
With this insolent rival! With that thought
there shot
Through his heart an acute jealous anguish.
But not
Even thus could his clear worldly sense quite
excuse
Those strange words to the Duke. She was
free to refuse
Himself, free the Duke to accept, it was true;
Even then, though, this eager and strange
rendezvous,
How imprudent! To some unfrequented lone
inn,

And so late (for the night was about to begin)—
 She, companionless there!—had she bidden
 that man?

A fear, vague, and formless, and horrible, ran
 Through his heart.

XXIV.

At that moment he look'd up, and saw,
 Riding fast through the forest, the Duc de
 Luvois,

Who waved his hand to him, and sped out of
 sight.

The day was descending. He felt 'twould be
 night

Ere that man reached Saint Saviour.

XXV.

He walk'd on, but not
 Back toward Serchon; he walk'd on, but knew
 not in what

Direction, nor yet with what object, indeed,
 He was walking but still he walk'd on without
 heed.

XXVI.

The day had been sullen; but, towards his de-
 cline,

The sun sent a stream of wild light up the
 pine.

Darkly denting the red light reveal'd at its
 back,

The old ruin'd abbey rose roofless and black,
 The spring that yet oozed through the moss-
 paven floor,

Had suggested, no doubt, to the monks there,
 of yore,

The sight of that refuge where, back to its
 God,
 How many a heart, now at rest 'neath the sod,
 Had borne from the world all the same wild
 unrest
 That now prey'd on his own!

XXVII.

By the thoughts in his breast
 With varying impulse divided and torn,
 He traversed the scant heath, and reach'd the
 forlorn
 Autumn woodland, in which but a short while
 ago
 He had seen the Duke rapidly enter; and so
 He too enter'd. The light waned around him,
 and pass'd
 Into darkness. The wrathful, red Occident
 cast
 One glare of vindictive inquiry behind,
 As the last light of day from the high wood
 declined,
 And the great forest sigh'd its farewell to the
 beam
 And far off on the stillness the voice of the
 stream
 Fell faintly.

XXVIII.

O Nature, how fair is thy face,
 And how light is thy heart, and how friendless
 thy grace!
 Thou false mistress of man! thou dost sport
 with him lightly

In his hours of ease and enjoyment; and
brightly
Dost thou smile to his smile; to his joys thou
inclinest,
But his sorrows, thou knowest them not, nor
divinest.
While he woos, thou art wanton; thou lettest
him love thee;
But thou art not his friend, for his grief cannot
move thee;
And at last, when he sickens and dies, what
lost thou?
All as gay are thy garments, as careless thy
brow.
And thou laughest and toyest with any new-
comer,
Not a tear more for winter, a smile less for
summer!
Hast thou never an anguish to heave the heart
under
That fair breast of thine, O thou feminine
wonder
For all those—the young, and the fair, and the
strong,
Who have loved thee, and lived with thee
gayly and long,
And who now on thy bosom lie dead? and their
deeds
And their days are forgotten! O hast thou no
weeds
And not one year of mourning,—one out of the
many
That deck thy new bridals forever,—nor any

Regrets for thy lost loves, conceal'd from the
new
O thou widow of earth's generations? Go to!
If the sea and the night wind know aught of
these things,
They do not reveal it. We are not thy kings.

CANTO VI.

I.

“The huntsman has ridden too far on the
chase,
And eldritch, and eerie, and strange is the
place!
The castle betokens a date long gone by.
He crosses the courtyard with curious eye:
He wanders from chamber to chamber, and yet
From strangeness to strangeness his footsteps
are set;
And the whole place grows wilder and wilder,
and less
Like aught seen before. Each in absolute
dress,
Strange portraits regard him with looks of sur-
prise,
Strange forms from the arras start forth to his
eyes,
Strange epigraphs, blazon'd, burn out of the
wall:
The spell of a wizard is over it all.
In her chamber, enchanted, the Princess is
sleeping

And the vision is vanish'd from sight evermore!
 And the gray morning sees, as it drearily
 moves
 O'er a land long deserted, a madman that
 roves
 Through a ruin, and seeks to recapture a
 dream,
 Lost to life and its uses, withdrawn from the
 scheme
 Of man's walking existence, he wanders
 apart."

And this is an old fairy-tale of the heart.
 It is told in all lands, in a different tongue;
 Told with tears by the old, heard with smiles
 by the young.
 And the tale to each heart unto which it is
 known
 Has a different sense. It has puzzled my own.

II.

Eugene de Luvois was a man who, in part
 From strong physical health, and that vigor of
 heart
 Which physical health gives, and partly, per-
 chance,
 From a generous vanity native to France,
 With the heart of a hunter, whatever the quarry;
 Pursued it, too hotly impatient to tarry
 Or turn, till he took it. His trophies were
 trifles:
 But trifler he was not. When rose-leaves it
 rifles,
 No less than when oak-trees it ruins, the wind
 Its pleasures pursues with impetuous mind.

Both Eugene de Luvois and Lord Alfred had
been

Men of pleasure: but men's pleasant vices,
which, seen

Floating faint, in the sunshine of Alfred's soft
mood,

Seem'd amiable foibles, by Luvois pursued
With impetuous passion, seemed semi-Satanic.
Half-pleas'd you see brooks play with pebbles;
in panic

You watch them whirl'd down by the torrent.

In truth,

To the sacred political creed of his youth
The century which he was born to denied
All realization. Its generous pride
To degenerate protest on all things was sunk;
Its principles each to a prejudice shrunk.
Down the path of a life that led nowhere he
trod,

Where his whims were his guides, and his will
was his god,

And his pastime his purpose.

From boyhood possess'd

Of inherited wealth, he had learned to invest
Both his wealth and those passions wealth frees
from the cage

Which penury locks, in each vice of an age
All the virtues of which, by the creed he re-
vered,

Were to him illegitimate.

Thus, he appear'd

To the world what the world chose to have him
appear,—

The frivolous tyrant of Fashion, a mere

Reformer in coats, cards, and carriages! Still
 'Twas the vigor of nature, and tension of will,
 That found for the first time—perhaps for the
 last—

In Lucile what they lacked yet to free from the
 Past,
 Force, and faith, in the Future.

And so, in his mind,
 To the anguish of losing the woman was join'd
 The terror of missing his life's destination.
 Which in her had its mystical representation.

III.

And truly, the thought of it, scaring him, pass'd
 O'er his heart, while he now through the twi-
 light rode fast
 As a shade from the wing of some great bird
 obscene
 In a wide silent land may be suddenly seen,
 Darkening over the sands, where it startles and
 scares
 Some traveler stray'd in the waste unawares,
 So that thought more than once darken'd over
 his heart
 For a moment, and rapidly seem'd to depart.
 Fast and furious he rode through the thickets
 which rose
 Up the shaggy hillside: and the quarreling
 crows
 Clang'd above him, and clustering down the
 dim air
 Droop'd into the dark woods. By fits here and
 there

Shepherd fires faintly gleam'd from the valleys. Oh, how
He envied the wings of each wild bird, as now
He urged the steed over the dizzy ascent
Of the mountain! Behind him a murmur was sent
From the torrent—before him a sound from the tracts
Of the woodlands that waved o'er the wild cat-
aracts,
And the loose earth and loose stones roll'd momentarily down
From the hoofs of his steed to abysses unknown.
The red day had fallen beneath the black woods,
And the Powers of the night through the vast solitudes
Walk'd abroad and conversed with each other.
The trees
Were in sound and in motion, and mutter'd like seas
In Elfland. The road through the forest was hollow'd.
On he sped through the darkness, as though he were follow'd
Fast, fast by the Erl King!
The wild wizard-work
Of the forest at last open'd sharp, o'er the fork
Of a savage ravine, and behind the black stems
Of the last trees, whose leaves in the light gleam'd like gems.
Broke the broad moon above the voluminous
Rock-chaos,—the Hecate of that Tartarus!

With his horse reeking white, he at last reach'd
the door

Of a small mountain inn, on the brow of a hoar
Craggy promontory, o'er a fissure as grim,
Through which, ever roaring, there leap'd o'er
the limb

Of the rent rock a torrent of water, from sight,
Into pools that were feeding the roots of the
night.

A balcony hung o'er the water. Above
In a glimmering casement a shade seem'd to
move.

At the door the old negress was nodding her
head

As he reach'd it. "My mistress awaits you,"
she said.

And up the rude stairway of creaking pine
rafter

He follow'd her silent. A few moments after,
His heart almost stunned him, his head seem'd
to reel,

For a door closed—Luvois was alone with
Lucile.

IV.

In a gray traveling dress, her dark hair con-
fined

Streaming o'er it, and tossed now and then by
the wind

From the lattice, that waded the dull flame in
a spire

From a brass lamp before her—a faint hectic
fire

On her cheek, to her eyes lent the lustre of
 fever;
 They seem'd to have wept themselves wider
 than ever,
 Those dark eyes—so dark and so deep!
 “You relent?
 And your plans have been changed by the let-
 ter I sent?”
 There his voice sank, borne down by a strong
 inward strife.

LUCILE.

Your letter! yes, Duke. For it threatens
 man's life—
 Woman's honor.

LUVOIS.

The last, madam, not?

LUCILE.

Both. I glance
 At your own words; blush, son of the knight-
 hood of France,
 As I read them! You say in this letter . . .
 “I know
 Why now you refuse me; 'tis (is it not so?)
 For the man who has trifled before, wantonly,
 And now trifles again with the heart you deny
 To myself. But he shall not! By man's last
 wild law,
 I will seize on the right (the right, Duc de
 Luvois!)
 To avenge for you, woman, the past and to
 give

To the future its freedom. That man shall not
live
To make you as wretched as you have made
me!"

LUVOIS.

Well, madam, in those words what word do
you see
That threatens the honor of woman?

LUCILE.

See! . . . what,
What word, do you ask? Every word! would
you not,
Had I taken your hand thus, have felt that
your name
Was soil'd and dishonor'd by more than mere
shame
If the woman that bore it had first been the
cause
Of the crime which in these words is menaced?
You pause!
Woman's honor, you ask? Is there, sir, no
dishonor
In the smile of a woman, when men, gazing on
her,
Can shudder, and say, "In that smile is a
grave?"
No! you can have no cause, Duke, for no right
you have
In the contest you menace. That contest but
draws
Every right into ruin. By all human laws
Of man's heart I forbid it, by all sanctities
Of man's social honor!

The Duke dropp'd his eyes.
 "I obey you," he said, "but let woman beware
 How she plays fast and loose thus with human
 despair,
 And the storm in man's heart. Madam, yours
 was the right
 When you saw that I hoped, to extinguish hope
 quite,
 But you should from the first have done this,
 for I feel
 That you knew from the first that I loved you."

Lucile

This sudden reproach seem'd to startle.
 She raised
 A slow, wistful regard to his features, and
 gazed
 On them silent awhile. His own looks were
 downcast.
 Through her heart, whence its first wild alarm
 was now pass'd,
 Pity crept, and perhaps o'er her conscience a
 tear,
 Falling softly, awoke it.

However severe,
 Were they unjust, those sudden upbraidings,
 to her?
 Had she lightly misconstrued this man's char-
 acter,
 Which had seem'd, even when most impas-
 sioned it seem'd,
 Too self-conscious to lose all in love? Had she
 deem'd
 That this airy, gay, insolent man of the world,

So proud of the place the world gave him, held
furl'd

In his bosom no passion which once shaken
wide

Might tug, till it snapped, that erect lofty
pride;

Were those elements in him, which once roused
to strife

Overthrow a whole nature, and change a whole
life?

There are two kinds of strength. One, the
strength of the river

Which, through continents pushes its pathway
forever

To fling its fond heart in the sea; if it lose
This, the aim of its life, it is lost to its use,
It goes mad, is diffused into deluge, and dies.
The other, the strength of the sea; which sup-
plies

Its deep life from mysterious sources, and
draws

The river's life into its own life, by laws
Which it heeds not. The difference in each
case is this:

The river is lost, if the ocean it miss;
If the sea miss the river, what matter? The
sea

Is the sea still, forever. Its deep heart will
be

Self-sufficing, unconscious of loss as of yore;

Its sources are infinite; still to the shore,

With no diminution of pride, it will say,

"I am here; I, the sea! stand aside, and make
way!"

Was his love, then, the love of the river? and
she,
Has she taken that love for the love of the sea?
At that thought, from her aspect whatever had
been
Stern or haughty departed; and, humbled in
mien,
She approach'd him and brokenly murmur'd,
as though
To herself more than him, "Was I wrong? Is
it so?
Hear me, Duke! you must feel that, whatever
you deem
Your right to reproach me in this, you esteem
I may claim on one ground—I at least am sin-
cere.
You say that to me from the first it was clear
That you loved me. But what if this knowl-
edge were known
At a moment in life when I felt most alone,
At least able to be so! a moment, in fact,
When I strove from one haunting regret, to
retract
And emancipate life and once more to fulfil
Woman's destinies, duties, and hopes? would
you still
So bitterly blame me, Eugene de Luvois,
If I hoped to see all this, or deem'd that I saw
For a moment the promise of this in the
plighted
Affection of one who, in nature, united
So much that from others affection might
claim
If only affection were free? Do you blame

The hope of that moment? I deem'd my heart
 free
 From all, saving sorrow. I deem'd that in me
 There was yet strength to mould it once more
 to my will,
 To uplift it once more to my hope. Do you
 still
 Blame me, Duke, that I did not then bid you
 refrain
 From hope? alas! I too then hoped!"

LUVVOIS.

Oh, again,
 Yet again, say that thrice blessed word! say,
 Lucile,
 That you then deign'd to hope—

LUCILE.

Yes! to hope I could feel,
 And could give to you, that without which, all
 else given
 Were but to deceive, and to injure you even:
 A heart free from thoughts of another. Say,
 then,
 Do you blame that one hope?

LUVVOIS.

O Lucile!

"Say again,"
 She resumed, gazing down, and with faltering
 tone,
 "Do you blame me that, when I at last had to
 own
 To my heart that the hope it had cherish'd was
 o'er

And forever, I said to you then, 'Hope no more?'

I myself hoped no more!"

With but ill-suppressed wrath
The Duke answered . . . "What, then! he
recrossed your path,

This man, and you have but to see him, despite
Of his troth to another, to take back that
light

Worthless heart to your own, which he
wrong'd years ago!"

Lucile faintly, brokenly murmur'd . . .

"No! no! 'Tis not that—but alas—but I cannot
conceal

That I have not forgotten the past—but I feel
That I cannot accept all these gifts on your
part,—

In return for what . . . ah, Duke, what is it?
. . . a heart

Which is only a ruin!"

With words warm and wild,
"Though a ruin it be, trust me yet to rebuild
And restore it," Luvois cried; "though ruin'd
it be.

Since so dear is that ruin, ah, yield it to me!"
He approach'd her. She shrank back. The
grief in her eyes

Answer'd, "No!"

An emotion more fierce seem'd to rise
And to break into flame, as though fired by
the light

Of that look, in his heart. He exclaimed,
"Am I right?

You reject me! Accept him?"

“I have not done so,”
 She said firmly. He hoarsely resumed, “Not
 yet—no!

But can you with accents as firm promise me
 That you will not accept him?”

“Accept? Is he free?
 Free to offer?” she said.

“You evade me, Lucile,”
 He replied. “Ah, you will not avow what you
 feel!

He might make himself free? Oh, you blush
 —turn away!

Dare you openly look in my face, lady, say!
 While you deign to reply to one question from
 me?

I may hope not, you tell me: but tell me, may
 he?

What! silent? I alter my question. If quite
 Freed in faith from this troth might he hope
 then?”

“He might,”
 She said softly.

VI.

Those two whisper'd words in his breast,
 As he heard them, in one maddening moment
 releast

All that's evil and fierce in man's nature, to
 crush

And extinguish in man all that's good. In the
 rush

Of wild jealousy, all the fierce passions that
 waste

And darken and devastate intellect, chased

From its realm human reason. The wild ani-
 mal
 In the bosom of man set free. And of all
 Human passions the fiercest, fierce jealousy,
 fierce
 As the fire, and more wild than the whirlwind,
 to pierce
 And to rend, rush'd upon him; fierce jealousy,
 swell'd
 By all passions bred from it, and ever impell'd
 To involve all things else in the anguish within
 it
 And on others inflict its own pangs!
 At that minute
 What pass'd through his mind, who shall say?
 Who may tell
 The dark thoughts of man's heart, which the
 red glare of hell
 Can illumine alone?
 He stared wildly around
 That lone place, so lonely! That silence! no
 sound
 Reach'd that room, through the dark evening
 air, save drear
 Drip and roar of the cataract ceaseless and
 near!
 It was midnight all round on the weird silent
 weather;
 Deep midnight in him! They two,—lone and
 together,
 Himself, and that woman defenseless before
 him!
 The triumph and bliss of his rival flash'd o'er
 him.

The abyss of his own black despair seem'd to
 ope
 At his feet, with that awful exclusion of hope
 Which Dante read over the city of doom.
 All the Tarquin pass'd into his soul in the
 gloom,
 And uttering words he dared never recall,
 Words of insult and menace, he thunder'd
 down all
 The brew'd storm-cloud within him; its flashes
 scorch'd blind
 His own senses. His spirit was driven on the
 wind
 Of a reckless emotion beyond his control;
 A torrent seem'd loosen'd within him. His
 soul
 Surged up from that caldron of passion that
 hiss'd
 And seeth'd in his heart.

VII.

 He had thrown, and had miss'd
 His last stake.

VIII.

For, transfigured, she rose from the place
 Where he rested o'erawed: a saint's scorn on
 her face;
 Such a dread *vade retro* was written in light
 On her forehead, the fiend would himself, at
 that sight,
 Have sunk back abash'd to perdition. I know
 If Lucretia at Tarquin but once had look'd so,
 She had needed no dagger next morning.

He knew not—on, into the dark cloudy
weather—
The midnight—the mountains—on, over the
shelf
Of the precipice—on, still—away from himself!
Till exhausted, he sank 'mid the dead leaves
and moss
At the mouth of the forest. A glimmering
cross
Of gray stone stood for prayer by the woodside.
He sank
Prayerless, powerless, down at its base, 'mid
the dank
Weeds and grasses; his face hid amongst them.
He knew
That the night had divided his whole life in
two.
Behind him a Past that was over forever;
Before him a Future devoid of endeavor
And purpose. He felt a remorse for the one,
Of the other a fear. What remain'd to be done?
Whither now should he turn? Turn again, as
before,
To his old easy, careless existence of yore
He could not. He felt that for better or worse
A change had pass'd o'er him; an angry re-
morse
Of his own frantic failure and error had marr'd
Such a refuge forever. The future seem'd
barr'd
By the corpse of a dead hope o'er which he
must tread
To attain it. Life's wilderness round him was
spread.

XI.

So he lay there, like Lucifer, fresh from the
sight

Of a heaven scaled and lost; in the wide arms
of night

O'er the howling abysses of nothingness!
There

As he lay, Nature's deep voice was teaching
him prayer;

But what had he to pray to?

The winds in the woods,
The voices abroad o'er those vast solitudes,
Were in commune all around with the invisible
Power

That walk'd the dim world by Himself at that
hour.

But their language he had not yet learn'd—in
despite

Of the much he had learn'd—or forgotten it
quite,

With its once native accents. Alas! what had
he

To add to that deep-toned sublime symphony
Of thanksgiving? . . . A fiery finger was still
Scorching into his heart some dread sentence.

His will,

Like a wind that is put to no purpose, was wild
At its work of destruction within him. The
child

Of an infidel age, he had been his own god,
His own devil.

He sat on the damp mountain sod,
And stared sullenly up at the dark sky.

The clouds
 Had heap'd themselves over the bare west in
 crowds
 Of misshapen, incongruous potents. A green
 Streak of dreary, cold, luminous ether, between
 The base of their black barricades, and the
 ridge
 Of the grim world, gleam'd ghastly, as under
 some bridge,
 Cyclop-sized, in a city of ruins o'erthrown
 By sieges forgotten, some river, unknown
 And unnamed, widens on into desolate lands.
 While he gazed, that cloud-city invisible hands
 Dismantled and rent; and reveal'd, through a
 loop
 In the breach'd dark, the blemish'd and half-
 broken hoop
 Of the moon, which soon silently sank; and
 anon
 The whole supernatural pageant was gone.
 The wide night, discomfited, conscious of loss,
 Darken'd round him. One object alone—that
 gray cross—
 Glimmer'd faint on the dark. Gazing up, he
 descried
 Through the void air, its desolate arms out-
 stretch'd wide,
 As though to embrace him.

He turn'd from the sight,
 Set his face to the darkness, and fled.

XII.

When the light
Of the dawn grayly flicker'd and glared on the
 spent
Wearied ends of the night, like a hope that is
 sent
To the need of some grief when its need is the
 sorest,
He was sullenly riding across the dark forest
Toward Serchon.

 Thus riding, with eyes of defiance
Set against the young day, as disclaiming alli-
 ance
With aught that the day brings to man, he per-
 ceived
Faintly, suddenly, fleetingly, through the
 damp-leaved
Autumn branches that put forth gaunt arms on
 his way
The face of a man pale and wistful, and gray
With the gray glare of morning. Eugene de
 Luvois,
With the sense of a strange second sight, when
 he saw
That phantom-like face, could at once recog-
 nize,
By the sole instinct now left to guide him, the
 eyes
Of his rival, though fleeting the vision and dim,
With a stern sad inquiry fix'd keenly on him,
And, to meet it, a lie leap'd at once to his
 own:
A lie born of that lying darkness now grown
Over all in his nature! He answer'd that gaze

With a look which, if ever a man's look con-
veys
More intensely than words what a man means,
convey'd
Beyond doubt in its smile an announcement
which said,
"I have triumph'd. The question your eyes
would imply
Comes too late, Alfred Vargrave!"
And so he rode by,
And rode on, and rode gayly, and rode out of
sight
Leaving that look behind him to rankle and
bite.

XIII.

And it bit, and it rankled.

XIV.

Lord Alfred, scarce knowing,
Or choosing, or heeding the way he was going,
By one wild hope, impell'd, by one wild fear
pursued,
And led by one instinct, which seem'd to ex-
clude
From his mind every human sensation, save
one—
The torture of doubt—had stray'd moodily on,
Down the highway deserted, that evening in
which
With the Duke he had parted; stray'd on,
through rich
Haze of sunset, or into the gradual night,

Which darken'd, unnoticed, the land from his
sight,
Toward Saint Saviour; nor did the changed
aspect of all
The wild scenery round him avail to recall
To his senses their normal perceptions, until,
As he stood on the black shaggy brow of the
hill
At the mouth of the forest, the moon, which
had hung
Two dark hours in a cloud, slipp'd on fire from
among
The rent vapors and sunk o'er the ridge of the
world.
Then he lifted his eyes, and saw round him un-
furl'd,
In one moment of splendor, the leagues of dark
trees,
And the long rocky line of the wild Pyrenees.
And he knew by the milestone scored rough
on the face
Of the bare rock, he was but two hours from
the place
Where Lucile and Luvois must have met. This
same track
The Duke must have traversed, perforce, to
get back
To Serchon; not yet then the Duke had re-
turn'd!
He listen'd, he look'd up the dark, but dis-
cern'd
Not a trace, not a sound of a horse by the way.
He knew that the night was approaching to
day.

He resolved to proceed to Saint Saviour. The
 morn
 Which, at last, through the forest broke chill
 and forlorn,
 Reveal'd to him, riding toward Serchon, the
 Duke.
 'Twas then that the two men exchanged look
 for look.

xv.

And the Duke's rankled in him.

xvi.

He rush'd on. He tore
 His path through the thicket. He reach'd the
 inn door,
 Roused the yet drowsing porter, reluctant to
 rise,
 And inquired for the Countess. The man
 rubb'd his eyes.
 The Countess was gone. And the Duke?
 The man stared
 A sleepy inquiry.

With accents that scared
 The man's dull sense awake, "He, the strang-
 er," he cried,

"Who had been there that night!"

The man grinn'd and replied,
 With a variant intelligence, "He, oh ay, ay!
 He went after the lady,"

No further reply
 Could he give. Alfred Vargrave demanded no
 more

Flung a coin to the man, and so turn'd from the
door.

“What! the Duke then the night in that lone
inn had pass'd?

In that lone inn—with her!” Was that look
he had cast

When they met in the forest, that look which
remain'd

On his mind with its terrible smile, thus ex-
plain'd?

XVII.

The day was half-turn'd to the evening, before
He re-entered Serchon, with a heart sick and
sore.

In the midst of a light crowd of babblers, his
look,

By their voices attracted, distinguished the
Duke,

Gay, insolent, noisy, with eyes sparkling bright,
With laughter, shrill, airy, continuous.

Right

Through the throng Alfred Vargrave, with
swift sombre stride,

Glided on. The Duke noticed him, turn'd,
stepp'd aside,

And, cordially grasping his hand, whisper'd
low,

“O, how right have you been! There can
never be—no,

Never—any more contest between us! Milord,
Let us henceforth be friends!”

Having utter'd that word,

He turn'd lightly round on his heel, and again

His gay laughter was heard, echoed loud by
that train

Of his young imitators.

Lord Alfred stood still.

Rooted, stunn'd to the spot. He felt weary
and ill,

Out of heart with his own heart, and sick to
the soul

With a dull, stifling anguish he could not con-
trol.

Does he hear in a dream, through the buzz of
the crowd,

The Duke's blithe associates, babbling aloud
Some comment upon his gay humor that day?

He never was gayer: what makes him so gay?

'Tis doubt, say the flatterers, flattering in
tune,

Some vestal whose virtue no tongue dare im-
pugn

Has at last found a Mars—who, of course, shall
be nameless,

The vestal that yields to Mars only, is blame-
less!

Hark! hears he a name which, thus syllabled,
stirs

All his heart into tumult? . . . Lucile de
Nevers

With the Duke's coupled gayly, in some laugh-
ing, light,

Free allusion? Not so as might give him the
right

To turn fiercely round on his speaker, but yet
To a trite and irreverent compliment set!

XVIII.

Slowly, slowly, usurping that place in his soul
 Where the thought of Lucile was enshrined,
 did there roll
 Back again, back again, on its smooth down-
 ward course
 O'er his nature, with gather'd momentum and
 force.
 The world.

XIX.

“No!” he mutter'd, “she cannot have sinn'd!
 True! women there are (self-named women of
 mind!)
 Who love rather liberty—liberty, yes!
 To choose and to leave—than the legalized
 stress
 Of the lovinest marriage. But she—is she
 so?
 I will not believe it. Lucile? O, no, no!
 Not Lucile!
 “But the world? and, ah, what would it say?
 O, the look of that man, and his laughter, to-
 day!
 The gossip's light question! the slanderous jest!
 She is right! no, we could not be happy. 'Tis
 best
 As it is. I will write to her—write, O, my
 heart!
 And accept her farewell. Our farewell! must
 we part—
 Part thus, then—forever, Lucile? Is it so?
 Yes! I feel it. We could not be happy, I know.
 'Twas a dream! we must waken!”

XX.

With head bow'd, as though
 By the weight of the heart's resignation, and
 slow
 Moody footsteps, he turned to his inn.

Drawn apart
 From the gate, in the court-yard and ready to
 start,

Postboys mounted, portmanteaus packed up
 and made fast,

A traveling-carriage, unnoticed, he pass'd.

He order'd his horse to be ready anon;

Sent on, and paid, for the reckoning, and
 slowly pass'd

And ascended the staircase, and enter'd his
 room.

It was twilight. The chamber was dark in the
 gloom

Of the evening. He listlessly kindled a light
 On the mantel-piece; there a large card caught
 his sight—

A large card, a stout card, well-printed and
 plain,

Nothing flourishing, flimsy, affected, or vain,
 It gave a respectable look to the slab

That it lay on. The name was—

SIR RIDLEY MACNAB.

Full familiar to him was the name that he saw,
 For 'twas that of his own future uncle-in-law.

Mrs. Darcy's rich brother, the banker, well-
 known

As wearing the longest philacteried gown

Of all the rich Pharisees England can boast of;
A shrewd Puritan Scot, whose sharp wits made
the most of
This world and the next; having largely in-
vested
Not only where treasure is never molested
By thieves, moth, or rust; but on this earthly
ball
Where interest was high, and security small,
Of mankind there was never a theory yet
Not by some individual instance upset:
And so that sorrowful verse of the Psalm
Which declares that the wicked expand like the
palm
In a world where the righteous are stunted and
pent,
A cheering exception did Ridley present.
Like the worthy of Uz, Heaven prosper'd his
piety.
The leader of every religious society,
Christian knowledge he labor'd through life to
promote
With personal profit, and knew how to quote
Both the Stocks and the Scripture, with equal
advantage
To himself and admiring friends, in this Cant-
Age.

XXI.

Whilst over this card Alfred vacantly brooded,
A waiter his head through the doorway pro-
truded;
"Sir Ridley MacNab with Milord wish'd to
speak."

Alfred Vargrave could feel there were tears on
his cheek.

He brushed them away with a gesture of pride.
He glanced at the glass; when his own face
he eyed,

He was scared by his pallor. Inclining his
head,

He with tones calm, unshaken, and silvery,
said,

“Sir Ridley may enter.”

In three minutes more

That benign apparition appeared at the door.
Sir Ridley, released for a while from the cares
Of business, and minded to breathe the pure
airs

Of the blue Pyrenees, and enjoy his release,
In company there with his sister and niece,
Found himself now at Serchon—distributing
tracts,

Sowing seed by the way, and collecting new
facts

For Exeter Hall; he was starting that night
For Bigorre; he had heard, to his cordial de-
light,

That Lord Alfred was there, and, himself,
setting out

For the same destination; impatient, no doubt!
Here some commonplace compliments as to
“the marriage”

Through his speech trickled softly, like honey:
his carriage

Was ready. A storm seem'd to threaten the
weather;

If his young friend agreed, why not travel together?

With a footstep uncertain and restless, a frown
Of perplexity, during this speech, up and
down

Alfred Vargrave was striding; but, after a
pause

And a slight hesitation, the which seem'd to
cause

Some surprise to Sir Ridley, he answer'd—
“My dear

Sir Ridley, allow me a few moments here—
Half an hour at the most—to conclude an affair
Of a nature so urgent as hardly to spare
My presence (which brought me, indeed, to
this spot),

Before I accept your kind offer.”

“Why not?”

Said Sir Ridley, and smiled. Alfred Var-
grave, before

Sir Ridley observed it, had pass'd through the
door.

A few moments later, with footsteps revealing
Intense agitation of uncontroll'd feeling,
He was rapidly pacing the garden below.

What pass'd through his mind then is more
than I know.

But before one half-hour into darkness had fled,
In the court-yard he stood with Sir Ridley.

His tread

Was firm and composed. Not a sign on his
face

Betray'd there the least agitation. “The
place

You so kindly have offer'd," he said, "I
accept."

And he stretched out his hand. The two trav-
elers stepp'd

Smiling into the carriage.

And thus, out of sight,
They drove down the dark road, and into the
night.

XXII.

Sir Ridley was one of those wise men who, so
far

As their power of saying it goes, say with Zo-
phar,

"We, no doubt, are the people, and wisdom
shall die with us!"

Though of wisdom like theirs there is no small
supply with us.

Side by side in the carriage ensconced, the two
men

Began to converse somewhat drowsily, when
Alfred suddenly thought—"Here's a man of
ripe age,

At my side, by his fellows reputed as sage,
Who looks happy, and therefore who must have
been wise;

Suppose I with caution reveal to his eyes
Some few of the reasons which make me be-
lieve

That I neither am happy nor wise? 'twould
relieve

And enlighten, perchance, my own darkness
and doubt."

For which purpose a feeler he softly put out.
It was snapp'd up at once.

“What is truth?” jesting Pilate
Ask'd, and pass'd from the question at once
with a smile at

Its utter futility. Had he address'd it
To Ridley MacNab, he at least had confess'd it
Admitted discussion! and certainly no man
Could more promptly have answer'd the skept-
tical Roman

Than Ridley! Hear some street astronomer
talk!

Grant him two or three hearers, a morsel of
chalk,

And forthwith on the pavement he'll sketch
you the scheme

Of the heavens. Then hear him enlarge on
his theme.

Not afraid of La Place, nor of Arago, he!
He'll prove you the whole plan in plain A B C.
Here's you sun—call him A; B's the moon; it
is clear

How the rest of the alphabet brings up the rear
Of the planets. Now ask Arago, ask La Place
(Your sages who speak with the heavens face
to face!),

Their science in plain A B C to accord.
To your point-blank inquiry, my friends! not
a word

Will you get for your pains from their sad lips.
Alas!

Not a drop from the bottle that's quite full
will pass.

'Tis the half-empty vessel that freest emits

The water that's in it. 'Tis thus with men's
 wits;
 Or at least with their knowledge. A man's
 capability
 Of imparting to others a truth with facility
 Is proportion'd forever with painful exactness
 To the portable nature, the vulgar compactness,
 The minuteness in size, or the lightness in
 weight,
 Of the truth he imparts. So small coins circu-
 late
 More freely than large ones. A beggar asks
 alms,
 And we fling him a sixpence, nor feel any
 qualms;
 But if every street charity shook an investment,
 Or each beggar to clothe we must strip of a
 vestment,
 The length of the process would limit the act;
 And therefore the truth that's summed up in
 a tract
 Is most likely dispensed.

As for Alfred, indeed,
 On what spoonfuls of truth he was suffer'd to
 feed
 By Sir Ridley, I know not. This only I know,
 That the two men thus talking continued to
 go
 Onward somehow, together—on into the night
 The midnight—in which they escape from our
 sight.

XXIII.

And meanwhile a world had been changed in
its place,
And those glittering chains, that o'er blue
balmy space
Hang the blessing of darkness, had drawn out
of sight
To solace unseen hemispheres, the soft night,
And the dew of the dayspring benignly de-
scended,
And the fair morn to all things new sanction
extended,
In the smile of the East. And the lark soar-
ing on,
Lost in light, shook the dawn with a song from
the sun.
And the world laugh'd.
It wanted but two rosy hours
From the noon, when they pass'd through the
thick passion flowers
Of the little wild garden that dimpled before
The small house where their carriage now
stopp'd, at Bigorre.
And more fair than the flowers, more fresh
than the dew,
With her white morning robe flitting joyously
through
The dark shrubs with which the soft hillside
was clothed,
Alfred Vargrave perceived, where he paused,
his betrothed.
Matilda sprang to him, at once, with a face
Of such sunny sweetness, such gladness, such
grace,

XXV.

Yet, ere bidding farewell to Lucile de Nevers,
Hear her own heart's farewell in this letter of
hers.

THE COMTESSE DE NEVERS TO A FRIEND IN INDIA.

“Once more, O my friend, to your arms and
your heart,
And the places of old . . . never, never to part!
Once more to the palm, and the fountain!
Once more
To the land of my birth, and the deep skies of
yore!
From the cities of Europe, pursued by the fret
Of their turmoil wherever my footsteps are set;
From the children that cry for the birth, and
behold,
There is no strength to bear them—old Time
is so old!
From the world's weary masters, that come
upon earth
Sapp'd and mined by the fever they bear from
their birth;
From the men of small stature, mere parts of
a crowd,
Born too late, when the strength of the world
hath been bow'd;
Back,—back to the orient, from whose sun-
bright womb
Sprang the giants which now are no more, in
the bloom
And the beauty of times that are faded forever!

To the palms! to the tombs! to the still Sacred
River!

Where I too, the child of a day that is done,
First leaped into life, and look'd up at the sun,
Back again, back again, to the hill-tops of
home

I come O my friend, my consoler, I come!
Are the three intense stars, that we watch'd
night by night

Burning broad on the band of Orion, as bright?
Are the large Indian moons as serene as of old,
When, as children, we gather'd the moonbeams
for gold?

Do you yet recollect me, my friend? Do you
still

Remember the free games we play'd on the
hill,

'Mid those huge stones upheav'd, where we
recklessly trod

O'er the old ruin'd fane of the old ruin'd god?
How he frown'd while around him we care-
lessly play'd!

That frown on my life ever after hath stay'd,
Like the shade of a solemn experience upcast
From some vague supernatural grief in the
past.

For the poor god, in pain, more than anger,
he frown'd,

To perceive that our youth, though so fleeting,
had found,

In its transient and ignorant gladness, the bliss
Which his science divine seem'd divinely to
miss.

Alas! you may haply remember me yet

The free child, whose glad childhood myself
I forget.

I come—a sad woman, defrauded of rest:

I bear to you only a laboring breast:

My heart is a storm-beaten ark, wildly hurl'd
O'er the whirlpools of time, with the wrecks
of a world:

The dove from my bosom hath flown far away:
It is flown and returns not, though many a day
Have I watch'd from the windows of life for
its coming.

Friend, I sigh for repose, I am weary of roam-
ing.

I know not what Ararat rises for me

Far away, o'er the waves of the wandering
sea;

I know not what rainbow may yet, from far
hills,

Lift the primrose of hope, the cessation of ills:
But a voice, like the voice of my youth, in my
breast

Wakes and whispers me on—to the East! to
the East!

Shall I find the child's heart that I left there?
or find

The lost youth I recall with its pure peace of
mind?

Alas! who shall number the drops of the rain?
Or give to the dead leaves their greenness
again?

Who shall seal up the caverns the earthquake
hath rent?

Who shall bring forth the winds that within
 them are pent?

To a voice who shall render an image? or who
 From the heats of the noontide shall gather
 the dew?

I have burn'd out within me the fuel of life,
 Wherefore lingers the flame? Rest is sweet
 after strife.

I would sleep for a while. I am weary.

“My friend,
 I had meant in these lines to regather, and
 send

To our old home, my life's scatter'd links.
 But 'tis vain!

Each attempt seems to shatter the chaplet
 again;

Only fit now for fingers like mine to run o'er,
 Who return, a recluse, to those cloisters of
 yore

Whence too far I have wander'd.

“How many long years
 Does it seem to me now since the quick, scorch-
 ing tears,

While I wrote to you, splash'd out a girl's
 premature

Moans of pain at what women in silence en-
 dure!

To your eyes, friend of mine, and to your eyes
 alone,

That now long-faded page of my life hath
 been shown

Which recorded my heart's birth, and death,
 as you know,

Many years since,—how many?

“A few months ago
I seem'd reading it backward, that page! Why
explain

Whence or how? The old dream of my life
rose again.

The old superstition! the idol of old!

It is over. The leaf trodden down in the mold
Is not to the forest more lost than to me

That emotion. I bury it here by the sea

Which will bear me anon far away from the
shore

Of a land which my footsteps will visit no
more.

And a heart's *requiescat* I write on that grave.

Hark! the sigh of the wind, and the sound of
the wave,

Seem like voices of spirits that whisper me
home!

I come, O you whispering voices, I come!

My friend, ask me nothing.

“Receive me alone
As a Santon receives to his dwelling of stone
In silence some pilgrim the midnight may
bring:

It may be an angel that, weary of wing,

Hath paused in his flight from some city of
doom,

Or only a wayfarer stray'd in the gloom.

This only I know: that in Europe at least

Lives the craft or the power that must master
our East.

Wherefore strive where the gods must them-
selves yield at last?

Both they and their altars pass by with the
Past.

The gods of the household Time thrusts from
the shelf;

And I seem as unreal and weird to myself
As these idols of old.

“Other times, other men,
Other men, other passions!

“So be it! yet again
I turned to my birthplace, the birthplace of
morn,

And the light of those lands where the great
sun is born!

Spread your arms, O my friend! on your
breast let me feel

The repose which hath fled from my own.

“Your LUCILE.”

PART II.

CANTO I.

I.

Hail, Muse! But each Muse by this time has, I
know,
Been used up, and Apollo has bent his own
bow
All too long; so I leave unassaulted the portal
Of Olympus, and only invoke here a mortal.

Hail, Murray!—not Lindley,—but Murray and
Son.

Hail, omniscient, beneficent, great Two-in-
One!

In Albemarle Street may thy temple long
stand!

Long enlighten'd and led by thine erudite
hand,

May each novice in science nomadic unravel
Statistical mazes of modernized travel!

May each innkeeper knave long thy judgment
revere,

And the postboys of Europe regard thee with
fear;

While they feel, in the silence of baffled extor-
 tion,
 That knowledge is power! Long, long, like
 that portion
 Of the national soil which the Greek exile took
 In his baggage wherever he went, may thy book
 Cheer each poor British pilgrim, who trusts to
 thy wit
 Not to pay through his nose just for following
 it!
 May'st thou long, O instructor! preside o'er his
 way,
 And teach him alike what to praise and to pay!
 Thee, pursuing this pathway of song, once
 again
 I invoke, lest, unskill'd, I should wander in
 vain.
 To my call be propitious, nor, churlish refuse
 Thy great accents to lend to the lips of my
 Muse;
 For I sing of the Naiads who dwell 'mid the
 stems
 Of the green linden-trees by the waters of Ems.
 Yes! thy spirit descends upon mine, O John
 Murray!
 And I start—with thy book—for the Baths in a
 hurry.

II.

"At Coblenz a bridge of boats crosses the
 Rhine;
 And from thence the road, winding by Ehren-
 breitstein,
 Passes over the frontier of Nassau.

("N. B.

No custom-house here since the Zollverein."
See

Murray, paragraph 30.)

"The route, at each turn,
Here the lover of nature allows to discern,
In varying prospects, a rich wooded dale:
The vine and acacia-tree mostly prevail
In the foliage observable here; and, moreover,
The soil is carbonic. The road, under cover
Of the grape-clad and mountainous upland that
hems
Round this beautiful spot, brings the traveler
to—

"EMS.

A Schnellpost from Frankfort arrives every
day.

At the Kurhaus (the old Ducal mansion) you
pay
Eight florins for lodgings. A Restaurateur
Is attach'd to the place; but most travelers
prefer

(Including, indeed, many persons of note)
To dine at the usual-priced table d'hote.
Through the town runs the Lahn, the steep
green banks of which
Two rows of white picturesque houses enrich,
And between the high road and the river is
laid

Out a sort of a garden, call'd 'The Promenade.'
Female visitors here, who may make up their
mind
To ascend to the top of these mountains, will
find

On the banks of the stream, saddled all the day
 long,
 Troops of donkeys—sure-footed—proverbially
 strong;”
 And the traveler at Ems may remark, as he
 passes,
 Here, as elsewhere, the women run after the
 asses.

III.

’Mid the world’s weary denizens bound for
 these springs
 In the month when the merle on the maple-
 bough sings,
 Pursued to the place from dissimilar paths
 By a similar sickness, there came to the baths
 Four sufferers—each stricken deep through the
 heart,
 Or the head, by the selfsame invisible dart
 Of the arrow that flieth unheard in the noon,
 From the sickness that walketh unseen in the
 moon,
 Through this great lazaretto of life, where in
 each
 Infects with his own sores the next within
 reach.
 First of these were a young English husband
 and wife,
 Grown weary ere half through the journey of
 life.
 O Nature, say where, thou gray mother of
 earth,
 Is the strength of thy youth? that thy womb
 brings to birth

Only old men to-day! On the winds, as of old,
Thy voice in its accent is joyous and bold;
Thy forests are green as of yore; and thine
oceans

Yet move in the might of their ancient emo-
tions:

But man—thy last birth and thy best—is no
more

Life's free lord, that look'd up to the starlight
of yore,

With the faith on the brow, and the fire in the
eyes,

The firm foot on the earth, the high heart in
the skies;

But a gray-headed infant, defrauded of youth,
Born too late or too early.

The lady, in truth,
Was young, fair, and gentle; and never was
given

To more heavenly eyes the pure azure of
heaven.

Never yet did the sun touch to ripples of gold
Tresses brighter than those which her soft
hand unroll'd

From her noble and innocent brow, when she
rose,

An Aurora, at dawn, from her balmy repose,
And into the mirror the bloom and the blush
Of her beauty broke, glowing; like light in a
gush

From the sunrise in summer.

Love, roaming, shall meet
But rarely a nature more sound or more
sweet

Eyes brighter—brows whiter—a figure more
 fair
 Or lovelier lengths of more radiant hair—
 Than thine Lady Alfred! And here I aver
 (May those that have seen thee declare if I err)
 That not all the oysters in Britain contain
 A pearl pure as thou art.

Let some one explain,—
 Who may know more than I of the intimate life
 Of the pearl with the oyster,—why yet in his
 wife,
 In despite of her beauty—and most when he
 felt
 His soul to the sense of her loveliness melt—
 Lord Alfred miss'd something he sought for:
 indeed,
 The more that he miss'd it the greater the
 need;
 Till it seem'd to himself he could willingly
 spare
 All the charms that he found for the one charm
 not there.

IV.

For the blessings Life lends us, it strictly de-
 mands
 The worth of their full usufruct at our hands.
 And the value of all things exists, not indeed
 In themselves, but man's use of them, feeding
 man's need.
 Alfred Vargrave, in wedding with beauty and
 youth,
 Had embraced both Ambition and Wealth.
 Yet in truth



“Mid the dank weeds and grasses.”—Page 161.
Lucile.

Unfulfill'd the ambition, and sterile the wealth
 (In a life paralyzed by a moral ill-health),
 Had remain'd, while the beauty and youth,
 unredeem'd

From a vague disappointment at all things,
 but seem'd

Day by day to reproach him in silence for all
 That lost youth in himself they had fail'd to
 recall

No career had he follow'd, no object obtain'd
 In the world by those worldly advantages
 gain'd

From nuptials beyond which once seem'd to
 appear,

Lit by love, the broad path of a brilliant career.
 All that glitter'd and gleam'd through the
 moonlight of youth

With a glory so fair, now that manhood in
 truth

Grasp'd and gather'd it, seem'd like that false
 fairy gold

Which leaves in the hand only moss, leaves and
 mould

v.

Fairy gold! moss and leaves! and the young
 Fairy Bride?

Lived there yet fairy-lands in the face at his
 side?

Say, O friend, if at evening thou ever hast
 watch'd

Some pale and impalpable vapor, detach'd
 From the dim and disconsolate earth, rise and
 fall

O'er the light of a sweet serene star, until all
The chill'd splendor reluctantly waned in the
deep

Of its own native heaven? Even so seem'd to
creep

O'er that fair and ethereal face, day by day,
While the radiant vermeil, subsiding away,
Hid its light in the heart, and faint gradual veil
Of a sadness unconscious.

The lady grew pale
As silent her lord grew: and both, as they eyed
Each the other askance, turn'd, and secretly
sigh'd

Ah, wise friend, what avails all experience can
give?

True, we know what life is—but, alas! do we
live?

The grammar of life we have gotten by heart,
But life's self we have made a dead language
—an art,

Not a voice. Could we speak it, but once, as
'twas spoken

When the silence of passion the first time was
broken!

Cuvier knew the world better than Adam, no
doubt:

But the last man, at best, was but learned
about

What the first, without learning, enjoy'd.
What art thou

To the man of to-day, O Leviathan, now?

A science. What wert thou to him that from
ocean

First beheld thee appear? A surprise,—an
emotion!
When life leaps in the veins, when it beats in
the heart,
When it thrills as it fills every animate part,
Where lurks it? how works it? . . . we scarcely
detect it!
But life goes: the heart dies: haste, O leech,
and dissect it!
This accursed æsthetical, ethical age
Hath so finger'd life's hornbook, so blurr'd
every page,
That the old glad romance, the gay chivalrous
story
With its fables of faery, its legends of glory,
Is turn'd to a tedious instruction, not new
To the children that read it insipidly through.
We know too much of Love ere we love. We
can trace
Nothing new, unexpected, or strange in his
face
When we see it at last. 'Tis the same little
Cupid,
With the same dimpled cheek, and the smile
almost stupid,
We have seen in our pictures, and stuck on
our shelves,
And copied a hundred times over, ourselves,
And wherever we turn, and whatever we do,
Still that horrible sense of the *deja connu!*

VI.

Perchance 'twas the fault of the life that they
led;

Perchance 'twas the fault of the novels they
read;

Perchance 'twas the fault in themselves; I am
bound not

To say: this I know—that these two creatures
found not

In each other some sign they expected to find
Of a something unnamed in the heart or the
mind;

And, missing it, each felt a right to complain
Of a sadness which each found no word to
explain.

Whatever it was, the world noticed not it
In the light-hearted beauty, the light-hearted
wit.

Still, as once with the actors in Greece, 'tis the
case,

Each must speak to the crown with a mask on
his face.

Praise follow'd Matilda wherever she went.
She was flatter'd. Can flattery purchase con-
tent?

Yes. While to its voice, for a moment, she
listen'd,

The young cheek still bloom'd and the soft eyes
still glisten'd;

And her lord, when, like one of those light
vivid things

That glide down the gauzes of summer with
wings

Of rapturous radiance, unconscious she moved
Through that buzz of inferior creatures, which
proved

Her beauty, their envy, one moment forgot,

'Mid the many charms there, the one charm
that was not:
And when o'er her beauty enraptured he bow'd
(As they turn'd to each other, each flush'd from
the crowd),
And murmur'd those praises which yet seem'd
more dear
Than the praises of others had grown to her
ear,
She, too, ceased awhile her own fate to regret:
"Yes! . . . he loves me," she sigh'd; "this is
love, then—and yet!"

VII.

Ah, that yet! fatal word! 'tis the moral of all
Thought and felt, seen or done, in this world
since the Fall!
It stands at the end of each sentence we learn:
It flits in the vista of all we discern;
It leads us, forever and ever, away,
To find in to-morrow what flies with to-day.
'Twas this same little fatal and mystical word
That now, like a mirage, led my lady and lord
To the waters of Ems from the waters of
Marah!
Drooping pilgrims in Fashion's blank, arid
Sahara.

VIII.

At the same time, pursued by a spell much the
same,
To these waters two other worn pilgrims there
came;

One a man, one a woman: just now, at the
 latter,
 As the Reader I mean by and by to look at her
 And judge for himself, I will not even glance.

IX.

Of the self-crown'd young kings of the Fashion
 in France
 Whose resplendent regalia so dazzled the sight,
 Whose horse was so perfect, whose boots were
 so bright,
 Who so hailed in the salon, so mark'd in the
 Bois,
 Who so welcomed by all, as Eugene de Luvois?
 Of all the smooth-brow'd premature debauchees
 In that town of all towns, where Debauchery
 sees
 On the forehead of youth her mark everywhere
 graven,—
 In Paris I mean,—where the streets are all
 paven
 By those two fiends whom Milton saw bridging
 the way
 From Hell to this planet,—who, haughty and
 gay,
 The free rebel of life, bound or led by no law,
 Walk'd that causeway as bold as Eugene de
 Luvois?
 Yes! he march'd through the great masquerade,
 loud of tongue,
 Bold of brow: but the motley he mask'd in, it
 hung
 So loose, trail'd so wide, and appear'd to
 impede

So strangely at times the vex'd effort at speed,
 That a keen eye might guess it was made—not
 for him,
 But some brawler more stalwart of stature and
 limb.
 That it irk'd him, in truth, you at times could
 divine,
 For when low was the music, and split was
 the wine
 He would clutch at the garment, as though
 it oppress'd
 And stifled some impulse that choked in his
 breast.

x.

What! he, . . . the light sport of his frivolous
 ease!
 Was he, too, a prey to a mortal disease?
 My friend, hear a parable; ponder it well,
 For a moral there is in the tale that I tell.
 One evening, I sat in the Palais Royal,
 And there, while I laugh'd at Grassot and Arnal,
 My eye fell on the face of a man at my side;
 Every time that he laugh'd I observed that he
 sigh'd,
 As though vex'd to be pleased. I remark'd
 that he sat
 Ill at ease on his seat, and kept twirling his hat
 In his hand, with a look of unquiet abstraction.
 I inquired the cause of his dissatisfaction.
 "Sir," he said, "if what vexes me here you
 would know,
 Learn that, passing this way some few half-
 hours ago,

I walked into the Français, to look at Rachel.
(Sir, that woman in Phedre is a miracle!)—

Well

I ask'd for a box: they were occupied all:
For a seat in the balcony: all taken! a stall:
Taken too: the whole house was as full as
could be,—

Not a hole for a rat! I had just time to see
The lady I love tete-à-tete with a friend
In a box out of reach at the opposite end:
Then the crowd push'd me out. What was
left me to do?

I tried for the tragedy . . . *que voulez-vous?*
Every place for the tragedy book'd! . . . *mon*
ami.

The farce was close by: . . . at the farce *me*
voici!

The piece is a new one; and Grassot plays
well:

There is drollery, too, in that fellow Ravel:
And Hyacinth's nose is superb! . . . yet I
meant

My evening elsewhere, and not thus, to have
spent.

Fate orders these things by her will, not by
ours!

Sir, mankind is the sport of invisible powers."

I once met the Duc de Luvois for a moment;
And I mark'd when his features I fix'd in my
comment,

O'er those features the same vague disquietude
stray

I had seen on the face of my friend at the
play;
And I thought that he too, very probably, spent
His evenings not wholly as first he had meant.

XI.

O source of the holiest joys we inherit,
O Sorrow, thou solemn, invisible spirit!
Ill fares it with man when, through life's desert
sand,
Grown impatient too soon for the long promised
land,
He turns from the worship of thee, as thou
art,
An expressless and imageless truth in the
heart,
And takes of the jewels of Egypt, the pelf
And the gold of the Godless, to make to him-
self,
A gaudy, idolatrous image of thee,
And then bows to the sound of the cymbal the
knee.
The sorrows we make to ourselves are false
gods;
Like the prophets of Baal, our bosoms with
rods
We may smite, we may gash at our hearts till
they bleed,
But these idols are blind, deaf, and dumb to
our need.
The land is athirst, and cries out! . . . 'tis in
vain;
The great blessing of Heaven descends not in
rain.

XII.

It was night; and the lamps were beginning to
 gleam
 Through the long linden-trees, folded each in
 his dream,
 From that building which looks like a temple
 . . . and his
 The Temple of—Health? Nay, but enter! I
 wish
 That never the rosy-hued deity knew
 One votary out of that sallow-cheek'd crew
 Of Courlanders, Wallacs, Greeks, affable Rus-
 sians,
 Explosive Parisians, potato-faced Prussians;
 Jews—Hamburghers chiefly:—pure patriots.—
 Suabians;—
 “Cappadocians and Elamites, Cretes and Arabi-
 ans,
 And the dwellers in Pontus” . . . My muse
 will not weary
 More lines with the list of them . . . *cur*
fremuere?
 What is it they murmur, and mutter, and hum?
 Into what Pandemonium is Pentecost come?
 Oh, what is the name of the god at whose fane
 Every nation is mix'd in so motley a train?
 What weird Kabala lies on those tables out-
 spread?
 To what oracle turns with attention each head?
 What holds these pale worshipers each so
 devout,
 And what are those hierophants busied about?

XIII.

Here passes, repasses, and flits to and fro,
 And rolls without ceasing the great Yes and
 No:
 Round this altar alternate the weird Passions
 dance,
 And the God worship'd here is the old God of
 Chance.
 Through the wide-open doors of the distant
 saloon
 Flute, hautboy, and fiddle are squeaking in
 tune;
 And an indistinct music forever is roll'd,
 That mixes and chimes with the chink of the
 gold,
 From a vision, that flits in a luminous haze,
 Of figures forever eluding the gaze;
 It fleets through the doorway, it gleams on the
 glass,
 And the weird words pursue it—*Rouge Impair,*
et Passe!
 Like a sound borne in sleep through such
 dreams as encumber
 With haggard emotions the wild wicked slum-
 ber
 Of some witch when she seeks, through a
 nightmare, to grab at
 The hot hoof of the fiend, on her way to the
 Sabbat.

XIV.

The Duc de Luvois and Lord Alfred had met
 Some few evenings ago (for the season as yet

Was but young) in this selfsame Pavilion of
Chance.

The idler from England, the idler from France
Shook hands, each, of course, with much cor-
dial pleasure:

An acquaintance at Ems is to most men a
treasure,

And they both were too well-bred in aught to
betray

One discourteous remembrance of things pass'd
away.

'Twas a sight that was pleasant, indeed, to be
seen,

These friends exchange greetings;—the men
who had been

Foes so nearly in days that were past.

This, no doubt

Is why, on the night I am speaking about,
My Lord Alfred sat down by himself at rou-
lette,

Without one suspicion his bosom to fret,
Although he had left, with his pleasant French
friend,

Matilda, half vex'd, at the room's farthest end.

xv.

Lord Alfred his combat with Fortune began
With a few modest thalers—away they all
ran—

The reserve follow'd fast in the rear. As his
purse

Grew lighter his spirits grew sensibly worse.

One needs not a Bacon to find a cause for it:

'Tis an old law in physics—*Natura abhorret*

Vacuum—and my lord, as he watch'd his last
crown
Tumble into the bank, turn'd away with a
frown
Which the brows of Napoleon himself might
have deck'd
On that day of all days when an empire was
wreck'd
On thy plain, Waterloo, and he witness'd the
last
Of his favorite Guard cut to pieces, aghast!
Just then Alfred felt, he could scarcely tell
why,
Within him the sudden strange sense that some
eye
Had long been intently regarding him there,—
That some gaze was upon him too searching
to bear.
He rose and look'd up. Was it fact? Was it
fable?
Was it dream? Was it waking? Across the
green table,
That face, with its features so fatally known—
Those eyes, whose deep gaze answer'd
strangely his own—
What was it? Some ghost from its grave come
again?
Some cheat of a feverish, fanciful brain?
Or was it herself—with those deep eyes of hers,
And that face unforgotten?—Lucile de Nevers!

XVI.

Ah, well that pale woman a phantom might
seem,

Who appear'd to herself but the dream of a
dream!
'Neath those features so calm, that fair fore-
head so hush'd,
That pale cheek forever by passion unflush'd,
There yawned an insatiate void, and there
heaved
A tumult of restless regrets unrelieved.
A brief noon of beauty was passing away,
And the chill of the twilight fell, silent and
gray,
O'er that deep, self-perceived isolation of soul.
And now, as all around her the deep evening
stole,
With its weird desolations, she inwardly grieved
For the want of that tender assurance received
From the warmth of a whisper, the glance of
an eye,
Which should say, or should look, "Fear thou
naught,—I am by!"
And thus, through that lonely and self-fix'd
existence,
Crept a vague sense of silence, and horror, and
distance:
A strange sort of faint-footed fear,—like a
mouse
That comes out, when 'tis dark, in some old
ducal house
Long deserted, where no one the creature can
scare,
And the forms on the arras are all that move
there.

In Rome,—in the Forum,—there open'd one
night

A gulf. All the augurs turn'd pale at the
sight.

In this omen the anger of Heaven they read.
Men consulted the gods: then the oracle
said:—

“Ever open this gulf shall endure, till at last
That which Rome hath most precious within
it be cast.”

The Romans threw in it their corn and their
stuff,

But the gulf yawn'd as wide. Rome seem'd
likely enough

To be ruin'd ere this rent in her heart she could
choke,

Then Curtius, revering the oracle, spoke:

“O Quirites! to this Heaven's question is come:
What to Rome is more precious? The man-
hood of Rome.”

He plunged, and the gulf closed.

The tale is not new;

But the moral applies many ways, and is true.

How, for hearts rent in twain, shall the curse
be destroy'd?

'Tis a warm human life that must fill up the
void.

Through many a heart runs the rent in the
fable;

But who to discover a Curtius is able?

xvii.

Back she came from her long hiding-place, at
the source

Of the sunrise; where, fair in their fabulous
course,
Run the rivers of Eden: an exile again,
To the cities of Europe—the scenes and the
men,
And the life, and the ways, she had left: still
oppress'd
With the same hungry heart, and unpeaceable
breast.
The same, to the same things! The world, she
had quitted
With a sigh, with a sigh she re-enter'd. Soon
flitted
Through the salons and clubs, to the great sat-
isfaction
Of Paris, the news of a novel attraction.
The enchanting Lucile, the gay Countess, once
more
To her old friend, the World, had reopen'd her
door;
The World came, and shook hands, and was
pleased and amused
With what the World then went away and
abused.
From the woman's fair fame it in naught could
detract:
'Twas the woman's free genius it vex'd and
attack'd
With a sneer at her freedom of action and
speech.
But its light careless cavils, in truth, could not
reach
The lone heart they aim'd at. Her tears fell
beyond

The world's limit, to feel that the world could
respond

To that heart's deepest, innermost yearning,
in naught.

'Twas no longer this earth's idle inmates she
sought:

The wit of the woman sufficed to engage
In the women's gay court the first men of the
age.

Some had genius; and all, wealth of mind to
confer

On the world: but that wealth was not lav-
ish'd for her.

For the genius of man, though so human
indeed,

When call'd out to man's help by some great
human need,

The right to a man's chance acquaintance
refuses

To use what it hoards for mankind's nobler
uses.

Genius touches the world at but one point
alone

Of that spacious circumference, never quite
known

To the world; all the infinite number of lines
That radiate thither a mere point combines,

But one only,—some central affection apart
From the reach of the world, in which Genius
is Heart,

And love, life's fine center, includes heart and
mind.

And therefore it was that Lucile sigh'd to find
Men of genius appear, one and all in her ken,

When they stoop'd themselves to it, as mere
clever men;
Artists, statesmen, and they in whose works
are unfurl'd
Worlds new-fashion'd for man, as mere men of
the world.
And so, as alone now she stood, in the sight
Of the sunset of youth, with her face from the
light,
And watch'd her own shadow grow long at her
feet,
As though stretch'd out, the shade of some
other to meet,
The woman felt homeless and childless: in
scorn
She seem'd mock'd by the voices of children
unborn;
And when from these somber reflections away
She turn'd, with a sigh, to that gay world,
more gay
For her presence within it, she knew herself
friendless;
That her path led from peace, and that path
appear'd endless!
That even her beauty had been but a snare,
And her wit sharpen'd only the edge of
despair.

XVIII.

With a face all transfigured and flush'd by
surprise,
Alfred turn'd to Lucile. With those deep
searching eyes

She look'd into his own. Not a word that she
said,
Not a look, not a blush, one emotion betray'd.
She seem'd to smile through him, at something
beyond:
When she answer'd his questions, she seem'd
to respond
To some voice in herself. With no trouble
descried,
To each troubled inquiry she calmly replied,
Not so he. At the sight of that face back
again
To his mind came the ghost of a long stifled
pain,
A remember'd resentment, half checked by a
wild
And relentless regret like a motherless child
Softly seeking admittance, with plaintive
appeal,
To the heart which resisted its entrance.

Lucile

And himself thus, however, with freedom
allow'd
To old friends, talking still side by side, left
the crowd
By the crowd unobserv'd. Not unnoticed,
however,
By the Duke and Matilda. Matilda had never
Seen her husband's new friend.

She had follow'd by chance,
Or by instinct, the sudden half-menacing glance
Which the Duke, when he witness'd their
meeting, had turn'd,

On Lucile and Lord Alfred; and, scared, she
 discern'd
 On his feature the shade of a gloom so pro-
 found
 That she shudder'd instinctively. Deaf to the
 sound
 Of her voice, to some startled inquiry of hers
 He replied not, but murmur'd, "Lucile de
 Nevers,
 Once again then? so be it!" In the mind of
 that man,
 At that moment, there shaped itself vaguely
 the plan
 Of a purpose malignant and dark, such alone
 (To his own secret heart but imperfectly shown)
 As could spring from the cloudy, fierce chaos
 of thought
 By which all his nature to tumult was wrought.

XIX.

"So!" he thought, "they meet thus: and
 reweave the old charm!
 And she hangs on his voice, and she leans on
 his arm.
 And she heeds me not, seeks me not, recks not
 of me!
 Oh, what if I show'd her that I, too, can be
 Loved by one—her own rival—more fair and
 more young?"
 The serpent rose in him: a serpent which,
 stung,
 Sought to sting.
 Each unconscious, indeed, of the eye

Fix'd upon them, Lucile and my lord saunter'd by,
 In converse which seem'd to be earnest. A smile
 Now and then seem'd to show where their thoughts touch'd. Meanwhile
 The Muse of this story, convinced that they need her,
 To the Duke and Matilda returns, gentle Reader.

xx.

The Duke, with that sort of aggressive false praise
 Which is meant a resentful remonstrance to raise
 From a listener (as sometimes a judge, just before
 He pulls down the black cap, very gently goes o'er
 The case for the prisoner, and deals tenderly
 With the man he is minded to hang by and by),
 Had referr'd to Lucile, and then stopp'd to detect
 In the face of Matilda the growing effect
 Of the words he had dropp'd. There's no weapon that slays
 Its victim so surely (if well aim'd) as praise.
 Thus, a pause on their converse had fallen: and now
 Each was silent, preoccupied, thoughtful.
 You know
 There are moments when silence, prolong'd
 and unbroken,

More expressive may be than all words ever
spoken.

It is when the heart has an instinct of what
In the heart of another is passing. And that
In the heart of Matilda, what was it? Whence
came

To her cheek on a sudden that tremulous flame?
What weighed down her head?

All your eye could discover
Was the fact that Matilda was troubled. More-
over

That trouble the Duke's presence seem'd to
renew.

She, however, broke silence, the first of the
two.

The Duke was too prudent to shatter the spell
Of a silence which suited his purpose so
well.

She was plucking the leaves from a pale blush
rose blossom

Which had fall'n from the nosegay she wore
in her bosom.

"This poor flower," she said, "seems it not
out of place

In this hot, lamplit air, with its fresh, fragile
grace?"

She bent her head low as she spoke. With a
smile

The Duke watch'd her caressing the leaves all
the while,

And continued on his side the silence. He
knew

This would force his companion their talk to
renew

At the point that he wish'd; and Matilda
 divined
 The significant pause with new trouble of
 mind.
 She lifted one moment her head; but her look
 Encounter'd the ardent regard of the Duke,
 And dropp'd back on her floweret abash'd.
 Then, still seeking
 The assurance she fancied she show'd him by
 speaking,
 She conceived herself safe in adopting again
 The theme she should most have avoided just
 then.

XXI.

"Duke," she said, . . . and she felt, as she
 spoke, her cheek burn'd,
 "You know, then, this . . . lady?"
 "Too well!" he return'd.

MATILDA.

True; you drew with emotion her portrait just
 now.

LUVOIS.

With emotion?

MATILDA.

Yes, yes! you described her, I know,
 As possess'd of a charm all unrival'd.

LUVOIS.

Alas!

You mistook me completely! You, madam,
 surpass
 This lady as moonlight does lamplight; as
 youth

Surpasses its best imitations; as truth
 The fairest of falsehoods surpasses; as nature
 Surpasses art's masterpiece; ay, as the creature
 Fresh and pure in its native adornment sur-
 passes

All the charms got by heart at the world's
 looking-glasses!

"Yet you said,"—she continued with some
 trepidation,

"That you quite comprehended" . . . a slight
 hesitation

Shook the sentence, . . . "a passion so strong
 as" . . .

LUVOIS.

"True, true!

But not in a man that had once look'd at you.
 Nor can I conceive, or excuse, or . . .

"Hush! hush!"

She broke in, all more fair for one innocent
 blush,

"Between man and woman these things differ
 so!

It may be that the world pardons . . . (how
 should I know?)

In you what it visits on us; or 'tis true,
 It may be that we women are better than
 you."

LUVOIS.

Who denies it? Yet, madam, once more you
 mistake.

The world, in its judgment, some difference may
 make

'Twixt the man and the woman, so far as
 respects
 Its social enchantments; but not as affects
 The one sentiment which it were easy to
 prove,
 Is the sole law we look to the moment we love.

MATILDA.

That may be. Yet I think I would be less
 severe,
 Although so inexperienced in such things, I
 fear
 I have learn'd that the heart cannot always
 repress
 Or account for the feelings which sway it.
 "Yes! yes!
 That is too true, indeed" . . . the Duke sigh'd.
 And again
 For one moment in silence continued the twain.

XXII.

At length the Duke slowly, as though he had
 needed
 All this time to repress his emotions, pro-
 ceeded:
 "And yet! . . . what avails, then, to woman
 the gift
 Of a beauty like yours, if it cannot uplift
 Her heart from the reach of one doubt, one
 despair,
 One pang of wrong'd love, to which women
 less fair
 Are exposed, when they love?"
 With a quick change of tone,

As though by resentment impell'd, he went
on:—

“The name that you bear, it is whisper'd you
took

From love, not convention. Well, say, . . .
that look

So excited, so keen, on the face you must know
Throughout all its expressions,—that raptur-
ous glow,

Those eloquent features—significant eyes—
Which that pale woman sees, yet betrays no
surprise,”

(He pointed his hand, as he spoke, to the door.
Fixing with it Lucile and Lord Alfred) . . .
“before.

Have you ever once seen what just now you
may view

In that face so familiar? . . . no, lady, 'tis new.
Young, lovely, and loving, no doubt, as you are,
Are you loved?” . . .

XXIII.

He look'd at her—paused—felt if thus far
The ground held yet. The ardor with which
he had spoken,

This close, rapid question, thus suddenly
broken,

Inspired in Matilda a vague sense of fear,
As though some indefinite danger were near.
With composure, however, at once she re-
plied:—

“ 'Tis three years since the day when I first
was a bride,
And my husband I never had cause to suspect;

Nor ever have stoop'd, sir, such cause to detect.

Yet if in his looks or his acts I should see—
See, or fancy—some moment's oblivion of me,
I trust that I too should forget it,—for you
Must have seen that my heart is my husband's."

The hue

On her cheek, with the effort wherewith to the
Duke
She had uttered this vague and half frightened
rebuke,
Was white as the rose in her hand. The last
word
Seem'd to die on her lip, and could scarcely
be heard.

There was silence again,
A great step had been made
By the Duke in the words he that evening had
said.

There, half drown'd by the music, Matilda,
that night,
Had listen'd,—long listen'd—no doubt, in de-
spite
Of herself, to a voice she should never have
heard,
And her heart by that voice had been troubled
and stirr'd.

And so having suffered in silence his eye
To fathom her own, he resumed, with a sigh:

XXIV.

"Will you suffer me, lady, your thoughts to
invade

By disclosing my own? The position," he
said,

"In which we so strangely seem placed may
excuse

The frankness and force of the words which I
use.

You say that your heart is your husband's:
You say

That you love him. You think so, of course,
lady . . . nay,

Such a love, I admit, were a merit, no doubt.
But, trust me, no true love there can be with-
out

Its dread penalty—jealousy.

"Well, do not start!

Until now,—either thanks to a singular art
Of supreme self-control, you have held them
all down

Unreveal'd in your heart,—or you never have
known

Even one of those fierce irresistible pangs
Which deep passion engenders, that anguish
which hangs

On the heart like a nightmare, by jealousy
bred.

But if, lady, the love you describe, in the bed
Of a blissful security thus hath reposed
Undisturb'd, with mild eyelids on happiness
closed,

Were it not to expose to a peril unjust,
And most cruel, that happy repose you so
trust,

To meet, to receive, and, indeed, it may be,
For how long I know not, continue to see

A woman whose place rivals yours in the life
 And the heart which not only your title of
 wife,

But also (forgive me!) your beauty alone,
 Should have made wholly yours?—You, who
 gave all your own!

Reflect!—'tis the peace of existence you stake
 On the turn of a die. And for whose—for his
 sake?

While you witness this woman, the false point
 of view

From which she must now be regarded by you
 Will exaggerate to you, whatever they be,
 The charms I admit she possesses. To me
 They are trivial indeed; yet to your eyes, I
 fear

And foresee, they will true and intrinsic
 appear.

Self-unconscious, and sweetly unable to guess
 How more lovely by far is the grace you pos-
 sess,

You will wrong your own beauty. The graces
 of art,

You will take for the natural charm of the
 heart;

Studied manners, the brilliant and bold re-
 partee,

Will too soon in that fatal comparison be
 To your fancy more fair than the sweet timid
 sense

Which, in shrinking, betrays its own best elo-
 quence.

O then, lady, then, you will feel in your heart
 The poisonous pain of a fierce jealous dart!

While you see her, yourself you no longer will
 see,—
 You will hear her, and hear not yourself,—you
 will be
 Unhappy; unhappy, because you will deem
 Your old power less great than her power
 will seem.
 And I shall not be by your side, day by day,
 In despite of your noble displeasure, to say
 ‘You are fairer than she, as the star is more
 fair
 Than the diamond, the brightest that beauty
 can wear!’ ”

xxv.

This appeal, both by looks and by language,
 increased
 The trouble Matilda felt grow in her breast.
 Still she spoke with what calmness she could—
 “Sir, the while
 I thank you,” she said, with a faint scornful
 smile,
 “For your fervor in painting my fancied dis-
 tress:
 Allow me the right some surprise to express
 At the zeal you betray in disclosing to me
 The possible depth of my own misery.”
 “That zeal would not startle you, madam,” he
 said,
 “Could you read in my heart, as myself I have
 read,
 The peculiar interest which causes that zeal—”
 Matilda her terror no more could conceal.

“Duke,” she answer’d in accents short, cold
and severe,

As she rose from her seat, “I continue to hear;
But permit me to say, I no more understand.”

“Forgive!” with a nervous appeal of the hand,
And a well-feign’d confusion of voice and of
look,

“Forgive, oh, forgive me!” at once cried the
Duke.

“I forgot that you know me so slightly. Your
leave

I entreat (from your anger those words to re-
trieve)

For one moment to speak of myself,—for I
think

That you wrong me—”

His voice, as in pain, seem’d to sink;
And tears in his eyes, as he lifted them,
glisten’d.

XXVI.

Matilda, despite of herself, sat and listen’d.

XXVII.

“Beneath an exterior which seems, and may
be,

Worldly, frivolous, careless, my heart hides in
me,”

He continued, “a sorrow which draws me to
side

With all things that suffer. Nay, laugh not,”
he cried,

“At so strange an avowal.

“I seek at a ball,

For instance,—the beauty admired by all?
 No! some plain, insignificant creature, who
 sits
 Scorn'd of course by the beauties, and shunn'd
 by the wits
 All the world is accustom'd to wound, or
 neglect,
 Or oppress, claims my heart and commands
 my respect.
 No Quixote, I do not affect to belong,
 I admit, to those charter'd redressers of wrong;
 But I seek to console, where I can. 'Tis a
 part
 Not brilliant, I own, yet its joys bring no
 smart."

These trite words, from the tone which he
 gave them received
 An appearance of truth which might well be
 believed
 By a heart shrewder yet than Matilda's.

And so

He continued . . . "O lady! alas, could you
 know
 What injustice and wrong in this world I have
 seen!
 How many a woman, believed to have been
 Without a regret, I have known turn aside
 To burst into heartbroken tears undescried!
 On how many a lip have I witness'd the smile
 Which but hid what was breaking the poor
 heart the while!"

Said Matilda, "Your life, it would seem, then,
 must be
 One long act of devotion."

"Perhaps so," said he;
 "But at least that devotion small merit can
 boast,
 For one day may yet come,—if one day at the
 most,
 When, perceiving at last all the difference—
 how great!—
 'Twixt the heart that neglects, and the heart
 that can wait,
 'Twixt the natures that pity, the natures that
 pain,
 Some woman, that else might have pass'd in
 disdain
 Or indifference by me,—in passing that day
 Might pause with a word or a smile to repay
 This devotion,—and then" . . .

xxviii.

 To Matilda's relief
 At that moment her husband approach'd
 With some grief
 I must own that her welcome, perchance, was
 express'd
 The more eagerly just for one twinge in her
 breast
 Of a conscience disturb'd, and her smile not
 less warm;
 Though she saw the Comtesse de Nevers on
 his arm
 The Duke turn'd and adjusted his collar.
 Thought he,
 "Good! the gods fight my battle to-night. I
 foresee
 That the family doctor's the part I must play.

Very well! but the patients my visits shall
pay."

Lord Alfred presented Lucile to his wife;
And Matilda, repressing with effort the strife
Of emotions which made her voice shake, mur-
mur'd low

Some faint, troubled greeting. The Duke,
with a bow

Which betoken'd a distant defiance, replied
To Lucile's startled cry, as surprised she de-
scried

Her former gay wooer. Anon, with the grace
Of that kindness which seeks to win kindness,
her place

She assumed by Matilda, unconscious, per-
chance,

Or resolved not to notice the half-frighten'd
glance

That follow'd that movement.

The Duke to his feet
Arose; and, in silence, relinquish'd his seat.
One must own that the moment was awkward
for all;

But nevertheless, before long, the strange thrall
Of Lucile's gracious tact was by every one felt,
And from each the reserve seem'd, reluctant,
to melt;

Thus, conversing together, the whole of the
four

Thro' the crowd saunter'd smiling.

XXIX.

Approaching the door,
Eugene de Luvois, who had fallen behind,
By Lucile, after some hesitation, was join'd
With a gesture of gentle and kindly appeal,
Which appear'd to imply, without words, "Let
us feel

That the friendship between us in years that
are fled
Has survived one mad moment forgotten," she
said,

"You remain, Duke, at Ems?"

He turn'd on her a look
Of frigid, resentful, and sullen rebuke;
And then, with a more than significant glance
At Matilda, maliciously answer'd, "Perchance
I have here an attraction. And you?" he
return'd.

Lucile's eyes had follow'd his own, and dis-
cern'd

The boast they implied.

He repeated, "And you?"
And, still watching Matilda, she answered, "I
too."

And he thought, as with that word she left
him, she sigh'd.

The next moment her place she resumed by the
side

Of Matilda; and soon they shook hands at the
gate

Of the selfsame hotel.

xxx.

One depress'd, one elate,
The Duke and Lord Alfred again, thro' the
glooms

Of the thick linden alley, return'd to the
Rooms.

His cigar each had lighted, a moment before,
At the inn, as they turn'd, arm-in-arm, from
the door.

Ems cigars do not cheer a man's spirits *experto*
(*Me miserum quoties!*) *crede Roberto*.

In silence, awhile, they walk'd onward.

At last

The Duke's thoughts to language half con-
sciously pass'd.

LUVOIS.

Once more! yet once more!

ALFRED.

What?

LUVOIS.

We meet her, once more,
The woman for whom we two madmen of yore
(Laugh, *mon cher* Alfred, laugh!) were about
to destroy

Each other!

ALFRED.

It is not with laughter that I
Raise the ghost of that once troubled time.

Say! can you
Recall it with coolness and quietude now?

LUVOIS.

Now? yes! I, *mon cher*, am a true *Parisien*:
Now, the red revolution, the tocsin, and then
The dance and the play. I am now at the play.

ALFRED.

At the play, are you now? Then perchance I
now may
Presume, Duke, to ask you what, ever until
Such a moment, I waited . . .

LUVOIS.

Oh! ask what you will
Franc jeu! on the table my cards I spread out.
Ask!

ALFRED.

Duke, you were call'd to a meeting (no doubt
You remember it yet) with Lucile. It was
night
When you went; and before you return'd it
was light.
We met: you accosted me then with a brow
Bright with triumph: your words (you remem-
ber them now!)
Were "Let us be friends!"

LUVOIS.

Well?

ALFRED.

How then, after that,
Can you and she meet as acquaintances?

LUVUIS.

What!

Did she not then, herself, the Comtesse de
Nevers,
Solve your riddle to-night with those soft lips
of hers?

ALFRED.

In our converse to-night we avoided the past.
But the question I ask should be answered at
last:
By you, if you will; if you will not, by her.

LUVUIS.

Indeed? but that question, milord, can it stir
Such an interest in you, if your passion be o'er?

ALFRED.

Yes. Esteem may remain, although love be
no more.
Lucile ask'd me, this night, to my wife (under-
stand
To my wife!) to present her. I did so. Her
hand
Has clasp'd that of Matilda. We gentlemen
owe
Respect to the name that is ours: and, if so,
To the woman that bears it a twofold respect.
Answer, Duc de Luvois! Did Lucile then
reject
The proffer you made of your hand and your
name?
Or did you on her love then relinquish a claim
Urged before? I ask bluntly this question,
because

My title to do so is clear by the laws
 That all gentlemen honor. Make only one
 sign
 That you know of Lucile de Nevers aught, in
 fine,
 For which, if your own virgin sister were by,
 From Lucile you would shield her acquaint-
 ance, and I
 And Matilda leave Ems on the morrow.

XXXI.

The Duke

Hesitated and paused. He could tell, by the
 look
 Of the man at his side, that he meant what he
 said,
 And there flash'd in a moment these thoughts
 through his head:
 "Leave Ems! would that suit me? no! that
 were again
 To mar all. And besides, if I do not explain,
 She herself will . . . *et puis, il a raison: on est
 Gentilhomme avant tout!*" He replied there-
 fore, "Nay!
 Madame de Nevers had rejected me. I,
 In those days, I was mad; and in some mad
 reply
 I threatened the life of the rival to whom
 That rejection was due, I was led to presume.
 She fear'd for his life; and the letter which
 then
 She wrote me, I show'd you: we met: and
 again
 My hand was refused, and my love was denied,

And the glance you mistook was the vizard
 which Pride
 Lends to Humiliation.

“And so,” half in jest,
 He went on, “in this best world, ’tis all for the
 best;

You are wedded (bless’d Englishman!), wedded
 to one

Whose past can be call’d into question by none:
 And I (fickle Frenchman!) can still laugh to
 feel

I am lord of myself, and the Mode: and Lucile
 Still shines from her pedestal, frigid and fair
 As yon German moon o’er the linden-tops there!
 A Dian in marble that scorns any troth

With the little love-gods, whom I thank for us
 both,

While she smiles from her lonely Olympus
 apart,

That her arrows are marble as well as her
 heart.

Stay at Ems, Alfred Vargrave!”

xxxii.

The Duke, with a smile,
 Turn’d and enter’d the Rooms which, thus
 talking meanwhile,
 They had reach’d.

xxxiii.

Alfred Vargrave strode on (overthrown
 Heart and mind!) in the darkness bewilder’d
 alone:

“And so,” to himself did he mutter, “and so
 ’Twas to rescue my life, gentle spirit! and, oh,

For this did I doubt her! . . . , a light word—
a look—

The mistake of a moment! . . . for this I for-
sook—

For this? Pardon, pardon, Lucile! O Lucile!"
Thought and memory rang, like a funeral peal,
Weary changes on one dirge-like note through
his brain,

As he stray'd down the darkness.

xxxiv.

Re-entering again

The Casino, the Duke smiled. He turn'd to
roulette,

And sat down, and play'd fast, and lost largely,
and yet

He still smiled; night deepen'd: he play'd his
last number;

Went home: and soon slept: and still smil'd in
his slumber.

xxxv.

In his desolate Maxims, La Rochefoucauld
wrote,

"In the grief or mischance of a friend you may
note,

There is something which always gives pleas-
ure."

Alas!

That reflections fell short of the truth as it was.
La Rochefoucauld might have as truly set
down—

"No misfortune, but what some one turns to
his own

Advantage its mischief: no sorrow, but of it

There ever is somebody ready to profit:
 No affliction without its stock-jobbers, who all
 Gamble, speculate, play on the rise and the fall
 Of another man's heart, and make traffic in
 it."

Burn thy book, O La Rochefoucauld!

Fool! one man's wit

All men's selfishness how should it fathom?

O sage,

Dost thou satirize Nature?

She laughs at thy page.

CANTO II.

I.

COUSIN JOHN TO COUSIN ALFRED.

"London, 18—

"My dear Alfred,

This contempt of existence, this listless disdain
 Of your own life,—its joys and its duties,—the
 deuce

Take my wits if they find for it half an excuse!
 I wish that some Frenchman would shoot off
 your leg,

And compel you to stump through the world
 on a peg.

I wish that you had, like myself (more's the
 pity!),

To sit seven hours on this cursed committee.

I wish that you knew, sir, how salt is the bread
 Of another—(what is it that Dante has said?)

And the trouble of other men's stairs. In a
word,

I wish fate had some real affliction conferr'd
On your whimsical self, that, at least, you had
cause

For neglecting life's duties, and damning its
laws!

This pressure against all the purpose of life,
This self-ebullition, and ferment, and strife,
Betoken'd I grant that it may be in truth,
The richness and strength of the new wine of
youth.

But if, when the wine should have mellow'd
with time,

Being bottled and binn'd, to a flavor sublime
It retains the same acrid, incongruous taste,

Why, the sooner to throw it away that we haste
The better, I take it. And this vice of snarl-
ing,

Self-love's little lapdog, the overfed darling
Of a hypochondriacal fancy appears,
To my thinking, at least, in a man of your
years,

At the midnight of manhood with plenty to do,
And every incentive for doing it, too,

With the duties of life just sufficiently pressing
For prayer, and of joys more than most men
for blessing;

With a pretty young wife, and a pretty full
purse,—

Like poltroonery, puerile truly, or worse!

I wish I could get you at least to agree

To take life as it is, and consider with me

If it be not all smiles, that it is not all sneers;

It admits honest laughter, and needs honest
tears.

Do you think none have known but yourself all
the pain

Of hopes that retreat, and regrets that remain?
And all the wide distance fate fixes, no doubt,
'Twixt the life that's within, and the life that's
without?

What one of us finds the world just as he likes?
Or gets what he wants when he wants it? Or
strikes

Without missing the thing that he strikes at
the first?

Or walks without stumbling? Or quenches his
thirst

At one draught? Bah! I tell you! I, bach-
elor John,

Have had griefs of my own. But what then?
I push on

All the faster perchance that I yet feel the pain
Of my last fall, albeit I may stumble again.

God means every man to be happy, be sure.

He sends us no sorrows that have not some
cure.

Our duty down here is to do, not to know.

Live as though life were earnest, and life will
be so.

Let each moment, like Time's last ambassador,
come:

It will wait to deliver its message; and some
Sort of answer it merits. It is not the deed

A man does, but the way that he does it, should
plead

For the man's compensation in doing it.

“Here,

My next neighbor's a man with twelve thousand a year,
Who deems that life has not a pastime more pleasant
Than to follow a fox, or to slaughter a pheasant.

Yet this fellow goes through a contested election,

Lives in London, and sits, like the soul of dejection,

All the day through upon a committee, and late

To the last, every night, through the dreary debate,

As though he were getting each speaker by heart,

Though amongst them he never presumes to take part

One asks himself why, without murmur or question,

He foregoes all his tastes, and destroys his digestion,

For a labor of which the result seems so small.

‘The man is ambitious,’ you say. Not at all.

He has just sense enough to be fully aware

That he never can hope to be Premier, or share

The renown of a Tully;—or even to hold

A subordinate office. He is not so bold

As to fancy the House for ten minutes would bear

With patience his modest opinions to hear.

‘But he wants something!’

“What! with twelve thousand a year?”

What could Government give him would be
half so dear

To his heart as a walk with a dog and a gun
Through his own pheasant woods, or a capital
run?

'No; but vanity fills out the emptiest brain;
The man would be more than his neighbor, 'tis
plain;

And the drudgery drearily gone through in
town

Is more than repaid by provincial renown.
Enough if some Marchioness, lively and loose,
Shall have eyed him with passing complaisance;
the goose,

If the Fashion to him open one of its doors,
As proud as a sultan, returns to his boors.'

Wrong again! if you think so.

“For, primo; my friend
Is the head of a family known from one end
Of his shire to the other, as the oldest; and
therefore

He despises fine lords and fine ladies. He care
for

A peerage? no truly! Secondo; he rarely
Or never goes out: dines at Bellamy's sparely,
And abhors what you call the gay world.

“Then, I ask,
What inspires, and consoles, such a self-im-
posed task

As the life of this man,—but the sense of its
duty?

And I swear that the eyes of the haughtiest
beauty

Have never inspired in my soul that intense

Very well, with sublime illustration. Man's
heart

Is a mystery, doubtless. You trace it in art:—
The Greek Psyche,—that's beauty,—the per-
fect ideal.

But then comes the imperfect, perfectible real,
With its pain'd aspiration and strife. In those
pale

Ill-drawn virgins of Giotto you see it prevail.
You have studied all this. Then, the universe,
too,

Is not a mere house to be lived in, for you.
Geology opens the mind. So you know
Something also of strata and fossils; these
show

The bases of cosmical structure: some mention
Of the nebulous theory demands your atten-
tion;

And so on.

“In short, it is clear the interior
Of your brain, my dear Alfred, is vastly supe-
rior

In fiber, and fullness, and function, and fire,
To that of my poor parliamentary squire;
But your life leaves upon me (forgive me this
heat

Due to friendship) the sense of a thing incom-
plete.

You fly high. But what is it, in truth, you
fly at?

My mind is not satisfied quite as to that.
An old illustration's as good as a new,
Provided the old illustration be true.

We are children. Mere kites are the fancies
we fly,
Though we marvel to see them ascending so
high;
Things slight in themselves,—long-tail'd toys,
and no more:
What is it that makes the kite steadily soar
Through the realms where the cloud and the
whirlwind have birth
But the tie that attaches the kite to the earth?
I remember the lessons of childhood, you
see,
And the hornbook I learn'd on my mother's
knee,
In truth, I suspect little else do we learn
From this great book of life, which so shrewdly
we turn,
Saving how to apply, with a good or bad grace,
What we learn'd in the hornbook of childhood.
“Your case
Is exactly in point.
“Fly your kite, if you please,
Out of sight: let it go where it will on the
breeze;
But cut not the one thread by which it is bound,
Be it never so high, to the poor human ground.
No man is the absolute lord of his life.
You, my friend, have a home, and a sweet and
dear wife.
If I often have sigh'd by my own silent fire,
With the sense of a sometimes recurring desire
For a voice sweet and low, or a face fond and
fair,
Some dull winter evening to solace and share

With the love which the world its good children
allows
To shake hands with,—in short, a legitimate
spouse,
This thought has consoled me: 'at least I have
given
For my own good behavior no hostage to
heaven.'
You have, though. Forget it not! faith, if
you do,
I would rather break stones on a road than be
you.
If any man willfully injured, or led
That little girl wrong, I would sit on his
head
Even though you yourself were the sinner!
"And this
Leads me back (do not take it, dear cousin,
amiss!)
To the matter I meant to have mention'd, at
once,
But these thoughts put it out of my head for
the nonce.
Of all the preposterous humbugs and shams,
Of all the old wolves ever taken for lambs,
The wolves best received by the flocks he
devours
Is that uncle-in-law, my dear Alfred, of yours.
At least, this has long been my settled con-
viction,
And I almost would venture at once the pre-
diction
That before very long—but no matter! I
trust

For his sake and our own; that I may be unjust.

But Heaven forgive me, if cautious I am on
The score of such men as, with both God and
Mammon,
Seem so shrewdly familiar.

“Neglect not this warning.

There were rumors afloat in the city this
morning

Which I scarce like the sound of. Who knows?
would he fleece

At a pinch, the old hypocrite, even his own
niece?

For the sake of Matilda I cannot importune
Your attention too early. If all your wife’s
fortune

Is yet in the hands of that specious old sinner,
Who would dice with the devil, and yet rise up
winner,

I say, lose no time! get it out of the grab
Of her trustee and uncle, Sir Ridley MacNab.
I trust those deposits, at least, are drawn
out,

And safe at this moment from danger or doubt.

A wink is as good as a nod to the wise
Verbum sap. I admit nothing yet justifies

My mistrust; but I have in my own mind a
notion

That old Ridley’s white waistcoat, and airs of
devotion,

Have long been the only ostensible capital

On which he does business. If so, time must
sap it all

Sooner or later. Look sharp. Do not wait,

Draw at once. In a fortnight it may be too late.

I admit I know nothing. I can but suspect; I give you my notions. Form yours and reflect. My love to Matilda. Her mother looks well. I saw her last week. I have nothing to tell Worth your hearing. We think that the Government here

Will not last our next session. Fitz Funk is a peer,

You will see by the Times. There are symptoms which show

That the ministers now are preparing to go And finish their feasts of the loaves and the fishes.

It is evident they are clearing the dishes, And cramming their pockets with bonbons.

Your news

Will be always acceptable. Vere, of the Blues,

Has bolted with Lady Selina. And so, You have met with that hot-headed Frenchman? I know

That the man is a sad *mauvais sujet*. Take care

Of Matilda, I wish I could join you both there; But, before I am free, you are sure to be gone.

Good-by, my dear fellow. Yours anxiously,
JOHN."

II.

This is just the advice I myself would have given

To Lord Alfred, had I been his cousin which
Heaven

Be praised, I am not. But it reach'd him in-
deed

In an unlucky hour, and received little heed.

A half-languid glance was the most that he
lent at

That time to these homilies. *Primum dementai
Quem Deus vult perdere.* Alfred in fact

Was behaving just then in a way to distract

Job's self had Job known him. The more you'd
have thought

The Duke's court to Matilda his eye would
have caught,

The more did his aspect grow listless to hers,
And the more did it beam to Lucile de Nevers.

And Matilda, the less she found love in the
look

Of her husband, the less did she shrink from
the Duke

With each day that pass'd o'er them, they
each, heart from heart,

Woke to feel themselves further and further
apart.

More and more of his time Alfred pass'd at the
table;

Played high; and lost more than to lose he
was able.

He grew feverish, querulous, absent, perverse—
And here I must mention, what made matters
worse.

That Lucile and the Duke at the selfsame hotel
With the Vargraves resided. It needs not to
tell

That they all saw too much of each other.
 The weather
 Was so fine that it brought them each day all
 together
 In the garden, to listen, of course, to the
 band
 The house was a sort of phalanstery; and
 Lucile and Matilda were pleased to discover
 A mutual passion for music. Moreover
 The Duke was an excellent tenor; could sing
 "*Ange si pure*" in a way to bring down on the
 wing
 All the angels St. Cicely play'd to. My lord
 Would also at times, when he was not too
 bored,
 Play Beethoven, and Wagner's new music, not
 ill;
 With some little things of his own, showing
 skill
 For which reason, as for some others too,
 Their rooms were a pleasant enough rendez-
 vous,
 Did Lucile, then, encourage (the heartless
 coquette!)
 All the mischief she could not but mark?
 Patience yet.

III.

In that garden, an arbor, withdrawn from the
 sun,
 By laburnum and lilac with blooms overrun,
 Form'd a vault of cool verdure, which made,
 when the heat

Of the noontide hung heavy, a gracious retreat.
And here, with some friends of their own little
world,
In the warm afternoons, till the shadows un-
curl'd
From the feet of the lindens, and crept through
the grass,
Their blue hours would this gay little colony
pass.
The men loved to smoke, and the women to
bring,
Undeterred by tobacco, their work there, and
sing
Or converse, till the dew fell, and homeward
the bee
Floated, heavy with honey. Towards eve
there was tea
(A luxury due to Matilda,) and ice,
Fruit, and coffee.
Such an evening it was, while Matilda presided
O'er the rustic arrangements thus daily pro-
vided,
With the Duke, and a small German Prince
with a thick head,
And an old Russian Countess both witty and
wicked,
And two Austrian Colonels,—that Alfred, who
yet
Was lounging alone with his last cigarette,
Saw Lucile de Nevers by herself pacing slow
'Neath the shade of the cool linden trees to and
fro,
And joining her, cried, "Thank the good stars,
we meet! -"

I have so much to say to you!"

"Yes? . . ." with her sweet
Serene voice, she replied to him . . . "Yes?
and I too

Was wishing, indeed, to say somewhat to you."
She was paler just then than her wont was.

The sound

Of her voice had within it a sadness profound.
"You are ill!" he exclaim'd.

"No!" she hurriedly said,
"No, no!"

"You alarm me!"

She droop'd down her head.

"If your thoughts have of late sought, or cared,
to divine

The purpose of what has been passing in mine,
My farewell can scarcely alarm you."

ALFRED.

Your farewell! you go!

Lucile!

LUCILE.

Yes, Lord Alfred.

ALFRED.

Reveal

The cause of this sudden unkindness.

LUCILE.

Unkind?

ALFRED.

Yes! what else is this parting?

LUCILE.

No, no! are you blind?
 Look into your own heart and home. Can you
 see
 No reason for this, save unkindness in me?
 Look into the eyes of your wife—those true
 eyes
 Too pure and too honest in aught to disguise
 The sweet soul shining through them.

ALFRED.

Lucile! (first and last
 Be the word, if you will!) let me speak of the
 past.
 I know now, alas! though I know it too late,
 What pass'd at that meeting which settled my
 fate,
 Nay, nay, interrupt me not yet! let it be!
 I but say what is due to yourself—due to me
 And must say it.

He rush'd incoherently on
 Describing how, lately, the truth he had known,
 To explain how, and whence, he had wrong'd
 her before
 All the complicate coil wound about him of
 yore,
 All the hopes that had flown with the faith that
 was fled,
 "And then, O Lucile, what was left me," he
 said,
 "When my life was defrauded of you, but to
 take
 That life, as 'twas left, and endeavor to make

Unobserved by another, the void which re-
 main'd
 Unconcern'd to myself? If I have not attain'd,
 I have striven. One word of unkindness has
 never
 Pass'd my lips to Matilda. Her least wish has
 ever
 Received my submission. And if, of a truth,
 I have fail'd to renew what I felt in my youth,
 I at least have been loyal to what I do feel,
 Respect, duty, honor, affection. Lucile,
 I speak not of love, now, nor love's long re-
 gret!
 I would not offend you, nor dare I forget
 The ties that are round me. But may there
 not be
 A friendship yet hallow'd between you and me?
 May we not be yet friends — friends the
 dearest?"

“Alas!”

She replied, “for one moment, perchance, did
 it pass
 Through my own heart, that dream which for-
 ever hath brought
 To those who indulge it in innocent thought
 So fatal and evil a waking! But no.
 For in lives such as ours are, the Dream-tree
 would grow
 On the borders of Hades: beyond it, what
 lies?
 The wheel of Ixion, alas! and the cries
 Of the lost and tormented. Departed, for us,
 Are the days when with innocence we could
 discuss

Dreams like these. Fled, indeed, are the
dreams of my life!

Oh trust me, the best friend you have is your
wife.

And I—in that pure child's pure virtue, I bow
To the beauty of virtue. I felt on my brow
Not one blush when I first took her hand.

With no blush

Shall I clasp it to-night, when I leave you.

“Hush! hush

I would say that I wish'd to have said when
you came.

Do not think that years leave us and find us
the same!

The woman you knew long ago, long ago,
Is no more. You yourself have within you, I
know,

The germ of a joy in the years yet to be,
Whereby the past years will bear fruit. As
for me,

I go my own way,—onward, upward!

“O yet,

Let me thank you for that which ennobled
regret,

When it came, as it beautified hope ere it
fled,—

The love I once felt for you. True, it is dead,
But it is not corrupted. I too have at last

Lived to learn that love is not—(such love as is
past,

Such love as youth dreams of at least)—the
sole part

Of life, which is able to fill up the heart;

Even that of a woman.

“Between you and me
 Heaven fixes a gulf, over which you must see
 That our guardian angels can bear us no more.
 We each of us stand on an opposite shore,
 Trust a woman’s opinion for once. Women
 learn,
 By an instinct men never attain, to discern
 Each other’s true natures. Matilda is fair,
 Matilda is young—see her now, sitting there!—
 How tenderly fashion’d—(oh, is she not? say,)
 To love and be loved!”

IV.

He turn’d sharply away
 “Matilda is young, and Matilda is fair;
 Of all that you tell me pray deem me aware;
 But Matilda’s a statue, Matilda’s a child; Ma-
 tilda loves not—”

Lucile quietly smiled
 As she answer’d him:—“Yesterday, all that
 you say
 Might be true; it is false, wholly false, though,
 to-day.”

“How?—what mean you?”

“I mean that to-day,” she replied,
 “The statue with life has become vivified;
 I mean that the child to a woman has grown;
 And that woman is jealous.”

“What! she?” with a tone
 Of ironical wonder, he answer’d—“what she!
 She jealous!—Matilda!—of whom, pray?—not
 me!”

“My lord, you deceive yourself; no one but
 you

Is she jealous of. Trust me. And thank
 heaven, too,
 That so lately this passion within her hath
 grown.

For who shall declare, if for months she had
 known

What for days she has known all too keenly,
 I fear,

That knowledge perchance might have cost
 you more dear?"

"Explain! explain, madam!" he cried in sur-
 prise;

And terror and anger enkindled his eyes.

"How blind are you men!" she replied. "Can
 you doubt

That a woman, young, fair, and neglected—"
 "Speak out!"

He gasp'd with emotion. "Lucile! you mean
 —what?

Do you doubt her fidelity?"

"Certainly not.

Listen to me, my friend. What I wish to
 explain

Is so hard to shape forth. I could almost
 refrain

From touching a subject so fragile. However,
 Bear with me awhile, if I frankly endeavor

To invade for one moment your innermost life.
 Your honor, Lord Alfred, and that of your
 wife,

Are dear to me,—most dear! And I am con-
 vinced

That you rashly are risking that honor."

He winced,

That seek lonely places,—there rarely is want-
ing

Some voice at her side, with an evil enchanting
To conjure them to her."

"O lady, beware!

At this moment, around me I search every-
where

For a clew to your words"—

"You mistake them," she said,
Half-fearing, indeed, the effect they had made,
"I was putting a mere hypothetical case."

With a long look of trouble he gazed in her
face.

"Woe to him, . . ." he exclaim'd . . . "woe
to him that shall feel

Such a hope! for I swear if he did but reveal
One glimpse,—it should be the last hope of his
life!"

The clench'd hand and bent eyebrow beto-
ken'd the strife

She had roused in his heart.

"You forget," she began,

"That you menace yourself. You yourself are
the man

That is guilty. Alas! must it ever be so?

Do we stand in our own light, wherever we go,
And fight our own shadows forever. O think!
The trial from which you, the stronger ones,
shrink,

You ask woman, the weaker one, still to en-
dure;

You bid her be true to the laws you abjure;

To abide by the ties you yourselves rend asun-
der,

With the force that has fail'd you; and that,
 too, when under
 The assumption of right which to her you re-
 fuse,
 The immunity claim'd for yourselves you abuse
 Where the contract exists, it involves obliga-
 tion
 To both husband and wife, in an equal rela-
 tion.
 You unloose, in asserting your own liberty,
 A knot, which, unloosed, leaves another as
 free.
 Then, O Alfred! be juster at heart: and thank
 Heaven
 That Heaven to your wife such a nature has
 given
 That you have not wherewith to reproach her,
 albeit
 You have cause to reproach your own self,
 could you see it!"

VI.

In the silence that follow'd the last word she
 said,
 In the heave of his chest, and the droop of his
 head,
 Poor Lucile mark'd her words had sufficed to
 impart
 A new germ of motion and life to that heart
 Of which he himself had so recently spoken
 As dead to emotion—exhausted or broken!
 New fears would awaken new hopes in his life.
 In the husband indifferent no more to the wife

She already, as she had foreseen, could discover

That Matilda had gain'd, at her hands a new lover.

So after some moments of silence, whose spell
They both felt, she extended her hand to
him . . .

VII.

“Well?”

VIII.

“Lucile,” he replied, as that soft quiet hand
In his own he clasp'd warmly, “I both understand

And obey you.”

“Thank Heaven!” she murmur'd,

“O yet,

One word, I beseech you! I cannot forget,”
He exclaim'd, “we are parting for life. You
have shown

My pathway to me: but say, what is your
own?”

The calmness with which until then she had
spoken

In a moment seem'd strangely and suddenly
broken,

She turn'd from him nervously, hurriedly.

“Nay,

I know not,” she murmur'd. “I follow the
way

Heaven leads me; I cannot foresee to what
end.

I know only that far, far away it must tend

From all places in which we have met, or might
meet.

Far away!—onward—upward!"

A smile strange and sweet
As the incense that rises from some sacred cup
And mixes with music, stole forth, and
breathed up

Her whole face, with those words.

"Wheresoever it be,
May all gentlest angels attend you!" sighed he,
"And bear my heart's blessing wherever you
are!"

And her hand, with emotion, he kiss'd.

IX.

From afar
That kiss was, alas! by Matilda beheld
With far other emotions: her young bosom
swell'd

And her young cheek with anger was crim-
son'd.

The Duke
Adroitly attracted towards it her look
By a faint but significant smile.

X.

Much ill-construed,
Renown'd Bishop Berkley has fully, for one,
strew'd

With arguments, page upon page, to teach
folks

That the world they inhabit is only a hoax.
But it surely is hard, since we can't do without
them,

That our senses should make us so oft wish to
doubt them!

CANTO III.

I.

When first the red savage call'd Man strode, a
king,
Through the wilds of creation—the very first
thing
That his naked intelligence taught him to feel
Was the shame of himself; and the wish to
conceal
Was the first step in art. From the apron
which Eve
In Eden sat down out of fig-leaves to weave
To the furbelow'd flounce and the broad crin-
oline
Of my lady—you all know, of course, whom I
mean—
This art of concealment has greatly increas'd.
A whole world lies cryptic in each human
breast;
And that drama of passions as old as the hills,
Which the moral of all men in each man ful-
fills
Is only reveal'd now and then to our eyes
In the newspaper-files and the courts of assize.

II.

In the group seen so lately in sunlight assem-
bled,

'Mid those walks over which the laburnum-
bough trembled,
And the deep-bosom'd lilac, emparadising
The haunts where the blackbird and thrush flit
and sing,
The keenest eye could but have seen, and seen
only,
A circle of friends, minded not to leave lonely
The bird on the bough, or the bee on the blos-
som;
Conversing at ease in the garden's green bosom
Like those who, when Florence was yet in her
glories,
Cheated death and kill'd time with Boccaccian
stories.
But at length the long twilight more deeply
grew shaded,
And the fair night the rosy horizon invaded,
And the bee in the blossom, the bird on the
bough,
Through the shadowy garden were slumbering
now,
The trees only, o'er every unvisited walk,
Began on a sudden to whisper and talk.
And as each little sprightly and garrulous leaf
Woke up with an evident sense of relief,
They all seem'd to be saying . . . "Once more
we're alone,
And, thank Heaven, those tiresome people are
gone!"

III.

Through the deep blue concave of the luminous
air,

Large, loving, and languid, the stars here and
there,
Like the eyes of shy, passionate women, look'd
down
O'er the dim world whose sole tender light
was their own,
When Matilda, alone, from her chamber de-
scended,
And enter'd the garden, unseen, unattended.
Her forehead was aching and parch'd, and her
breast
By a vague inexpressible sadness oppress'd:
A sadness which led her, she scarcely knew
how,
And she scarcely knew why . . . (save, in-
deed, that just now
The house, out of which with a gasp she had
fled
Half-stifled, seem'd ready to sink on her
head) . . .
Out into the night air, the silence, the bright
Boundless starlight, the cool isolation of night!
Her husband that day had look'd once in her
face,
And press'd both her hands in a silent embrace,
And reproachfully noticed her recent dejection
With a smile of kind wonder and tacit affec-
tion.
He, of late so indifferent and listless! . . . at
last
Was he startled and awed by the change which
had pass'd
O'er the once radiant face of his young wife?
Whence came

That long look of solicitous fondness? . . . the
same

Look and language of quiet affection—the look
And the language, alas! which so often she
took

For pure love in the simple repose of its pur-
ity—

Her own heart thus lull'd to a fatal security!
Ha! would he deceive her again by this kind-
ness?

Had she been, then, O fool! in her innocent
blindness

The sport of transparent illusion? ah folly!
And that feeling, so tranquil, so happy, so holy,
She had taken, till then, in the heart, not alone
Of her husband, but also, indeed, in her own,
For true love, nothing else, after all, did it
prove

But a friendship profanely familiar?

“And love? . . .

What was love, then? . . . not calm, not secure
—scarcely kind

But in one, all intensest emotions combined:
Life and death: pain and rapture.”

Thus wandering astray,
Led by doubt, through the darkness she wan-
der'd away.

All silently crossing, recrossing the night,
With faint, meteoric, miraculous light,
The swift shooting stars through the infinite
burn'd

And into the infinite ever return'd.

And silently o'er the obscure and unknown
In the heart of Matilda there darted and shone

Wild instructions, revealing man's last right,
 which is
 The right of reprisals.

An image uncertain,
 And vague, dimly shaped itself forth on the
 curtain
 Of the darkness around her. It came, and it
 went;
 Through her senses a faint sense of peril it sent:
 It pass'd and repass'd her; it went and it came
 Forever returning; forever the same;
 And forever more clearly defined; till her eyes
 In that outline obscure could at last recognize
 The man to whose image the more and the more
 That her heart, now aroused from its calm
 sleep of yore,
 From her husband detach'd itself slowly, with
 pain,
 Her thoughts had return'd and return'd to,
 again,
 As though by some secret indefinite law,—
 The vigilant Frenchman—Eugene de Luvois!

VI.

A light sound behind her. She trembled. By
 some
 Night-witchcraft her vision a face had become.
 On a sudden she felt, without turning to view,
 That a man was approaching behind her. She
 knew
 By the fluttering pulse which she could not
 restrain,
 And the quick-beating heart, that this man
 was Eugene.

Her first instinct was flight; but she felt her
 slight foot
 As heavy as though to the soil it had root.
 And the Duke's voice retain'd her, like fear
 in a dream,

VII.

“Ah, lady! in life there are meetings which
 seem

Like a fate. Dare I think like a sympathy too?
 Yet what else can I bless for this vision of you?
 Alone with my thoughts, on this starlighted
 lawn,

By an instinct resistless, I felt myself drawn
 To revisit the memories left in that place
 Where so lately this evening I look'd in your
 face.

And I find,—you, yourself—my own dream!

“Can there be
 In this world one thought common to you and
 to me?

If so, . . . I, who deem'd but a moment ago
 My heart uncompanion'd, save only by woe,
 Should indeed be more bless'd than I dare to
 believe—

—Ah, but one word, but one from your lips to
 receive” . . .

Interrupting him quickly, she murmur'd, “I
 sought,

Here, a moment of solitude, silence, and
 thought.

Which I needed.” . . .

“Lives solitude only for one?

Must its charm by my presence so soon be
undone?

Ah, cannot two share it? What needs it for
this?—

The same thought in both hearts,—be it sorrow
or bliss;

If my heart be the reflex of yours, lady—you,
Are you not yet alone,—even though we be
two?"

"For that," . . . said Matilda, . . . "needs
were, you should read
What I have in my heart" . . .

"Think you, lady, indeed,
You are yet of that age when a woman conceals
In her heart so completely whatever she feels
From the heart of the man whom it interests
to know

And find out what that feeling may be? Ah,
not so,

Lady Alfred! Forgive me that in it I look,
But I read in your heart as I read in a book."

"Well, Duke! and what read you within it?
unless

It be, of a truth, a profound weariness,
And some sadness?"

"No doubt. To all facts there are laws.
The effect has its cause, and I mount to the
cause."

VIII.

Matilda shrank back; for she suddenly found
That a finger was press'd on the yet bleeding
wound

She, herself, had but that day perceived in her breast.

“You are sad,” . . . said the Duke (and that finger yet press’d

With a cruel persistence the wound it made bleed)—

You are sad, Lady Alfred, because the first need

Of a young and a beautiful woman is to be Beloved, and to love. You are sad; for you see That you are not beloved, as you deem’d that you were:

You are sad: for that knowledge hath left you aware

That you have not yet loved, though you thought that you had,

Yes, yes! . . . you are sad—because knowledge is sad!”

He could not have read more profoundly her heart.

“What gave you,” she cried, with a terrified start

“Such strange power!” . . .

“To read in your thoughts?” he exclaim’d,

“O lady,—a love, deep, profound—be it blamed Or rejected,—a love, true, intense—such, at least,

As you, and you only, could wake in my breast!”

“Hush, hush! . . . I beseech you . . . for pity!” she gasp’d,

Snatching hurriedly from him the hand he had clasp’d

In her effort instinctive to fly from the spot.

"For pity?" . . . he echoed, "for pity! and
 what
 Is the pity you owe him? his pity for you!
 He, the lord of a life, fresh as new-fallen dew!
 The guardian and guide of a woman, young,
 fair,
 And matchless! (whose happiness did he not
 swear
 To cherish through life?) he neglects her—for
 whom?
 For a fairer than she? No! the rose in the
 bloom
 Of that beauty which, even when hidd'n, can
 prevail
 To keep sleepless with song the aroused night-
 ingale,
 Is not fairer; for even in the pure world of
 flowers
 Her symbol is not, and this pure world of
 ours
 Has no second Matilda! For whom? Let
 that pass!
 'Tis not I, 'tis not you, that can name her,
 alas!
 And I dare not question or judge her. But
 why,
 Why cherish the cause of your own misery?
 Why think of one, lady, who thinks not of you?
 Why be bound by a chain which himself he
 breaks through?
 And why, since you have but to stretch forth
 your hand,
 The love which you need and deserve to com-
 mand,

Why shrink? Why repel it?"

"O hush, sir! O hush!"

Cried Matilda, as though her whole heart were
one blush.

"Cease, cease, I conjure you, to trouble my
life!

Is not Alfred your friend? and am I not his
wife?"

IX.

"And have I not, lady," he answer'd . . .

"respected

His rights as a friend till himself he neglected
Your rights as a wife? Do you think 'tis alone
For three days I have loved you? My love
may have grown,

I admit, day by day, since I first felt your eyes,
In watching their tears, and in sounding your
sighs.

But, O lady! I loved you before I believed
That your eyes ever wept, or your heart ever
grieved.

Then I deem'd you were happy—I deem'd you
possess'd

All the love you deserved,—and I hid in my
breast

My own love, till this hour—when I could not
but feel

Your grief gave me the right my own grief to
reveal!

I knew, years ago, of the singular power
Which Lucile o'er your husband possess'd.

Till the hour

In which he reveal'd it himself, did I,—say!—

By a word or a look, such a secret betray?
 No! no! do me justice. I never have spoken
 Of this poor heart of mine, till all ties he had
 broken

Which bound your heart to him. And now—
 now, that this love

For another hath left your own heart free to
 rove,

What is it,—even now,—that I kneel to im-
 plore you?

Only this, Lady Alfred! . . . to let me adore
 you

Unblamed: to have confidence in me: to
 spend

On me not one thought, save to think me your
 friend.

Let me speak to you,—ah, let me speak to you
 still!

Hush to silence my words in your heart, if you
 will.

I ask no response: I ask only your leave
 To live yet in your life, and to grieve when you
 grieve!"

x.

"Leave me, leave me!" . . . she gasp'd, with
 a voice thick and low

From emotion. "For pity's sake, Duke, let me
 go!

I feel that to blame we should both of us be,
 Did I linger."

"To blame? yes, no doubt!" . . . answer'd
 he,

“If the love of your husband, in bringing you
 peace,
 Had forbidden you hope. But he signs your
 release

By the hand of another. One moment! but
 one!

Who knows when, alas! I may see you alone
 As to-night I have seen you? or when we may
 meet

As to-night we have met? when, entranced at
 your feet,

As in this blessed hour, I may ever avow
 The thoughts which are pining for utterance
 now?”

“Duke! Duke!” . . . she exclaim’d . . . “for
 heaven’s sake let me go!

It is late. In the house they will miss me, I
 know.

We must not be seen here together. The night
 Is advancing. I feel overwhelm’d with affright!
 It is time to return to my lord.”

“To your lord?”

He repeated, with lingering reproach on the
 word.

“To your lord? do you think he awaits you
 in truth?

Is he anxiously missing your presence, for-
 sooth?

Return to your lord! . . . his restraint to
 renew?

And hinder the glances which are not for you?
 No, no! . . . at this moment his looks seek the
 face

Of another! another is there in your place!

Another consoles him! another receives
The soft speech which from silence your
absence relieves!"

XI.

"You mistake, sir!" . . . responded a voice,
calm, severe,
And sad. . . . "You mistake, sir! that other is
here."

Eugene and Matilda both started.

"Lucile!"

With a half-stifled scream, as she felt herself
reel

From the place where she stood, cried Matilda.

"Ho, oh!

What! eavesdropping, madam?" . . . the Duke
cried . . . "And so

You were listening?"

"Say: rather," she said, "that I heard,
Without wishing to hear it, that infamous
word,—

Heard—and therefore reply."

"Belle Comtesse," said the Duke,
With concentrated wrath in the savage rebuke,
Which betray'd that he felt himself baffled . . .

"you know

That your place is not here."

"Duke," she answered him slow,
"My place is where my duty is clear:
And therefore my place, at this moment, is
here.

O lady, this morning my place was beside
Your husband because (as she said this she
sigh'd)

I felt that from folly fast growing to crime—
The crime of self-blindness — Heaven yet
spared me time.

To save for the love of an innocent wife
All that such love deserved in the heart and
the life

Of the man to whose heart and whose life you
alone

Can with safety confide the pure trust of your
own.”

She turn'd to Matilda, and lightly laid on her
Her soft quiet hand . . .

“ 'Tis, O lady, the honor
Which that man has confided to you, that, in
spite

Of his friend, I now trust I may yet save
to-night—

Save for both of you' for yours I revere;
Duc de Luvois, what say you?—my place is not
here?”

XII.

And, so saying, the hand of Matilda she
caught,

Wound one arm round her waist unresisted
and sought

Gently, softly, to draw her away from the spot.
The Duke stood confounded, and follow'd
them not

But not yet the house had they reach'd when
Lucile

Her tender and delicate burden could feel
Sink and falter beside her. Oh, then she
knelt down,

Flung her arms round Matilda, and press'd to
her own

The poor bosom beating against her.

The moon,
Bright, breathless, and buoyant, and brimful
of June,

Floated up from the hillside, sloped over the
vale,

And poised himself loose in mid-heaven, with
one pale,

Minute, scintillessent, and tremulous star
Swinging under her globe like a wizard-lit car,
Thus to each of those women revealing the
face

Of the other. Each bore on her features the
trace

Of a vivid emotion. A deep inward shame
The cheek of Matilda had flooded with flame.
With her enthusiastic emotion, Lucile
Trembled visibly yet; for she could not but
feel

That a heavenly hand was upon her that night,
And it touch'd her pure brow to a heavenly
light.

“In the name of your husband, dear lady,”
she said;

“In the name of your mother, take heart! Lift
your head,

For those blushes are noble. Alas! do not trust
To that maxim of virtue made ashes and dust,
That the fault of the husband can cancel the
wife's.

Take heart! and take refuge and strength in
your life's

Pure silence,—there, kneel, pray, and hope,
weep, and wait!"

"Saved, Lucile!" sobb'd Matilda, "but saved
to what fate?

Tears, prayers, yes! not hopes."

"Hush!" the sweet voice replied.

"Fool'd away by a fancy, again to your side
Must your husband return. Doubt not this.

And return

For the love you can give, with the love that
you yearn

To receive, lady. What was it chill'd you
both now?

Not the absence of love, but the ignorance how
Love is nourish'd by love. Well! henceforth
you will prove

Your heart worthy of love,—since it knows how
to love."

XIII.

"What gives you such power over me, that I
feel

Thus drawn to obey you? What are you, Lu-
cile?"

Sigh'd Matilda, and lifted her eyes to the face
Of Lucile.

There pass'd suddenly through it the trace
Of deep sadness; and o'er that fair forehead
came down

A shadow which yet was too sweet for a frown.

"The pupil of sorrow, perchance" . . . she
replied.

"Of sorrow?" Matilda exclaim'd . . . "O con-
fide

To my heart your affliction. In all you made
known

I should find some instruction, no doubt, for
my own!"

"And I some consolation, no doubt; for the
tears

Of another have not flow'd for me many
years."

It was then that Matilda herself seized the hand
Of Lucile in her own, and uplifted her; and
Thus together they enter'd the house.

XIV.

'Twas the room

Of Matilda.

The languid and delicate gloom
Of a lamp of pure white alabaster, aloft
From the ceiling suspended, around it slept
soft.

The casement oped into the garden. The pale
Cool moonlight stream'd through it. One lone
nightingale sung aloof in the laurels.

And here, side by side,
Hand in hand, the two women sat down unde-
sried
Save by guardian angels.

As, when, sparkling yet
From the rain, that, with drops that are jewels,
leaves wet

The bright head it humbles, a young rose in-
clines

To some pale lily near it, the fair vision shines
As one flower with two faces, in hush'd tearful
speech,

Like the showery whispers of flowers, each to
 each
 Link'd, and leaning together, so loving, so
 fair,
 So united, yet diverse, the two women there
 Look'd, indeed, like two flowers upon one
 drooping stem,
 In the soft light that tenderly rested on them.
 All that soul said to soul in that chamber, who
 knows?
 All that heart gain'd from heart?
 Leave the lily, the rose,
 Undisturb'd with their secret within them.
 For who
 To the heart of the flowret can follow the dew?
 A night full of stars! O'er the silence, unseen,
 The footsteps of sentinel angels, between
 The dark land and deep sky were moving.
 You heard
 Pass'd from earth up to heaven the happy
 watchword
 Which brighten'd the stars as amongst them it
 fell
 From earth's heart, which it eased. . . . "All
 is well! all is well!"

CANTO IV.

I.

The Poets pour wine; and, when 'tis new, all
 decry it;
 But, once let it be old, every trifler must try it.

And Polonius, who praises no wine that's not
Massic,
Complains of my verse, that my verse is not
classic.

And Miss Tilburina, who sings, and not badly,
My earlier verses, sighs "Commonplace sadly!"
As for you, O Polonius, you vex me but
slightly;

But you, Tilburina, your eyes beam so brightly
In despite of their languishing looks, on my
word,

That to see you look cross I can scarcely afford.
Yes! the silliest woman that smiles on a bard
Better far than Longinus himself can reward
The appeal to her feelings of which she ap-
proves;

And the critics I most care to please are the
Loves.

Alas, friend! what boots it, a stone at his head
And a brass on his breast,—when a man is
once dead?

Ay! were fame the sole guerdon, poor guerdon
were then

Theirs who, stripping life bare, stand forth
models for men.

The reformer's?—a creed by posterity learnt
A century after its author is burnt!

The poet's?—a laurel that hides the bald
brow

It hath blighted! The painter's?—ask Raphael
now

Which Madonna's authentic! The states-
man's?—a name

For parties to blacken, or boys to declaim!

The soldier's?—three lines on the cold Abbey pavement!

Were this all the life of the wise and the brave meant,

All it ends in, thrice better, Neæra, it were
Unregarded to sport with thine odorous hair,
Untroubled to lie at thy feet in the shade
And be loved, while the roses yet bloom over-
head,

Than to sit by the lone hearth, and think the
long thought,

A severe, sad, blind schoolmaster, envied for
naught

Save the name of John Milton! For all men,
indeed,

Who in some choice edition may graciously
read,

With fair illustration, and erudite note,
The song which the poet in bitterness wrote,
Beat the poet, and notably beat him, in this—
The joy of the genius is theirs, whilst they miss
The grief of the man: Tasso's song—not his
madness!

Dante's dreams—not his waking to exile and
sadness!

Milton's music — but not Milton's blind-
ness! . . .

Yet rise,
My Milton, and answer, with those noble eyes
Which the glory of heaven hath blinded to
earth!

Say—the life, in the living it, savors of worth:
That the deed, in the doing it, reaches its aim:
That the fact has a value apart from the fame:

That a deeper delight, in the mere labor, pays
 Scorn of lesser delights, and laborious days:
 And Shakespeare, though all Shakespeare's
 writings were lost,
 And his genius, though never a trace of it
 crossed
 Posterity's path, not the less would have dwelt
 In the isle with Miranda, with Hamlet have
 felt
 All that Hamlet hath uttered, and haply where,
 pure
 On its death-bed, wrong'd Love lay, have
 moan'd with the Moor!

II.

When Lord Alfred that night to the salon re-
 turn'd
 He found it deserted. The lamp dimly burn'd
 As though half out of humor to find itself there
 Forced to light for no purpose a room that was
 bare.
 He sat down by the window alone. Never yet
 Did the heavens of lovelier evening beget
 Since Latona's bright childbed that bore the
 new moon!
 The dark world lay still, in a sort of sweet
 swoon,
 Wide open to heaven; and the stars on the
 stream
 Were trembling like eyes that are loved on the
 dream
 Of a lover; and all things were glad and at rest
 Save the unquiet heart in his own troubled
 breast.

He endeavor'd to think—an unwonted employ-
ment,
Which appear'd to afford him no sort of enjoy-
ment.

III.

“Withdraw into yourself. But, if peace you
seek there for,
Your reception, beforehand, be sure to prepare
for,”

Wrote the tutor of Nero; who wrote, be it said,
Better far than he acted—but peace to the
dead!

He bled for his pupil: what more could he do?
But Lord Alfred, when into himself he with-
drew,

Found all there in disorder. For more than an
hour

He sat with his head droop'd like some stub-
born flower

Beaten down by the rush of the rain—with
such force

Did the thick, gushing thoughts hold upon him
the course

Of their sudden descent, rapid, rushing, and
dim,

From the cloud that had darken'd the evening
for him.

At one moment he rose—rose and open'd the
door,

And wistfully look'd down the dark corridor
Toward the room of Matilda. Anon, with a
sigh

Of an incomplete purpose, he crept quietly

Back again to his place in a sort of submission
 To doubt, and return'd to his former position,—
 That loose fall of the arms, that dull droop of
 the face,
 And the eye vaguely fix'd on impalpable space.
 The dream, which till then had been lulling his
 life,
 As once Circe the winds, had seal'd thought;
 and his wife
 And his home for a time he had quite, like
 Ulysses,
 Forgotten; but now o'er the troubled Abysses
 Of the spirit within him, æolian, forth leapt
 To their freedom new-found, and resistlessly
 swept
 All his heart into tumult, the thoughts which
 had been
 Long pent up in their mystic recesses unseen.

IV.

How long he thus sat there, himself he knew
 not.
 Till he started, as though he were suddenly
 shot,
 To the sound of a voice too familiar to doubt,
 Which was making some noise in the passage
 without,
 A sound English voice, with a round English
 accent,
 Which the scared German echoes resentfully
 back sent;
 The complaint of a much disappointed cab-
 driver

Mingled with it, demanding some ultimate
stiver;
Then, the heavy and hurried approach of a
boot
Which reveal'd by its sound no diminutive foot
And the door was flung suddenly open, and on
The threshold Lord Alfred by bachelor John
Was seized in that sort of affectionate rage or
Frenzy of hugs which some stout Ursa Major
On some lean Ursa Minor would doubtless be-
stow
With a warmth for which only starvation and
snow
Could render one grateful. As soon as he
could,
Lord Alfred contrived to escape, nor be food
Any more for those somewhat voracious em-
braces.
Then the two men sat down and scann'd each
other's faces;
And Alfred could see that his cousin was taken
With unwonted emotion. The hand that had
shaken
His own trembled somewhat. In truth he de-
scried,
At a glance, something wrong.

v.

“What’s the matter?” he cried.
“What have you to tell me?”

JOHN.

What! have you not heard?

LUCILE.

Heard what?

ALFRED.

JOHN.

This sad business—

ALFRED.

I? no, not a word.

JOHN.

You received my last letter?

ALFRED.

I think so. If not,

What then?

JOHN.

You have acted upon it?

ALFRED.

On what?

JOHN.

The advice that I gave you—

ALFRED.

Advice?—let me see?

You always are giving advice, Jack, to me.
About Parliament was it?

JOHN.

Hang Parliament! no.

The Bank, the Bank, Alfred!

ALFRED.

What Bank?

JOHN.

Heavens! I know
 You are careless;—but surely you have not for-
 gotten,—
 Or neglected . . . I warn'd you the whole
 thing was rotten.
 You have drawn those deposits at least?

ALFRED.

No, I meant
 To have written to-day; but the note shall be
 sent
 To-morrow, however.

JOHN.

To-morrow? too late!
 Too late! oh, what devil bewitch'd you to wait?

ALFRED.

Mercy save us! you don't mean to say . . .

JOHN.

Yes, I do.

ALFRED.

What! Sir Ridley? . . .

JOHN.

Smash'd, broken, blown up, bolte'd, too!

ALFRED.

But his own niece? . . . In heaven's name,
 Jack. . . .

JOHN.

Oh, I told you
 The old hypocritical scoundrel would . . .

ALFRED.

Hold! you

Surely can't mean we are ruin'd?

JOHN.

Sit down!

A fortnight ago a report about town
 Made me most apprehensive. Alas, and alas!
 I at once wrote and warn'd you. Well, now
 let that pass.

A run on the Bank about five days ago
 Confirm'd my forebodings too terribly, though.
 I drove down to the city at once; found the
 door

Of the Bank closed; the Bank had stopp'd pay-
 ment at four.

Next morning the failure was known to be
 fraud;

Warrant out for McNab; but McNab was
 abroad:

Gone—we cannot tell where. I endeavor'd to
 get

Information: have learn'd nothing certain as
 yet—

Not even the way that old Ridley was gone:
 Or with those securities what he had done:
 Or whether they had been already call'd out:
 If they are not, their fate is, I fear, past a
 doubt.

Twenty families ruin'd, they say: what was
 left,—

Unable to find any clew to the cleft
 The old fox ran to earth in,—but join you as
 fast

As I could, my dear Alfred?*

IV.

He stopp'd here, aghast
 At the change in his cousin, the hue of whose
 face
 Had grown livid; and glassy his eyes fix'd on
 space.
 "Courage, courage!" . . . said John, . . .
 "bear the blow like a man!"
 And he caught the cold hand of Lord Alfred.
 There ran
 Through that hand a quick tremor. "I bear
 it," he said,
 "But Matilda? the blow is to her!" And his
 head
 Seem'd forced down, as he said it.

JOHN.

Matilda? Pooh, pooh!
 I half think I know the girl better than you.
 She has courage enough—and to spare. She
 cares less
 Than most women for luxury, nonsense, and
 dress.

ALFRED.

The fault has been mine.

*These events, it is needless to say, Mr. Morse,
 Took place when Bad News as yet travel'd by horse;
 Ere the world, like a cockchafer, buzz'd on a wire,
 Or Time was calcined by electrical fire;
 Ere a cable went under the hoary Atlantic,
 Or the word Telegram drove grammarians frantic.

JOHN.

Be it yours to repair it:
If you did not avert, you may help her to bear
it.

ALFRED.

I might have averted.

JOHN.

Perhaps so. But now
There is clearly no use in considering how,
Or whence, came the mischief. The mischief
is here.

Broken shins are not mended by crying—that's
clear!

One has but to rub them and get up again,
And push on—and not think too much of the
pain.

And at least it is much that you see that to her
You owe too much to think of yourself. You
must stir

And arouse yourself, Alfred, for her sake. Who
knows?

Something yet may be saved from this wreck.
I suppose

We shall make him disgorge all he can, at the
least.

“O Jack, I have been a brute idiot! a beast!
A fool! I have sinn'd, and to her I have
sinn'd!

I have been heedless, blind, inexcusably blind!
And now, in a flash, I see all things!”

As though
To shut out the vision, he bow'd his head low



“Knew not her husband stood watching.”—Page 295.

Lucile.

On his hands; and the great tears in silence
 roll'd on,
 And fell momentarily, heavily, one after one.
 John felt no desire to find instant relief
 For the trouble he witness'd.

He guess'd, in the grief
 Of his cousin, the broken and heartfelt admis-
 sion
 Of some error demanding a heartfelt contri-
 tion:
 Some oblivion perchance which could plead
 less excuse
 To the heart of a man re-aroused to the use
 Of the conscience God gave him, than simply
 and merely
 The neglect for which now he was paying so
 dearly.
 So he rose without speaking, and paced up and
 down
 The long room, much afflicted, indeed, in his
 own
 Cordial heart for Matilda.

Thus, silently lost
 In his anxious reflection, he cross'd and re-
 cross'd
 The place where his cousin yet hopelessly hung
 O'er the table; his fingers entwisted among
 The rich curls they were knotting and drag-
 ging: and there,
 That sound of all sounds the most painful to
 hear,
 The sobs of a man! Yet so far in his own
 Kindly thoughts was he plunged, he already
 had grown

Unconscious of Alfred.

And so for a space

There was silence between them.

VII.

At last, with sad face

He stopp'd short, and bent on his cousin awhile
A pain'd sort of wistful, compassionate smile,
Approach'd him—stood o'er him,—and sud-
denly laid

One hand on his shoulder—

“Where is she?” he said.

Alfred lifted his face all disfigured with tears
And gazed vacantly at him, like one that ap-
pears

In some foreign language to hear himself
greeted,

Unable to answer.

“Where is she?” repeated

His cousin.

He motion'd his hand to the door;

“There, I think,” he replied. Cousin John
said no more,

And appear'd to relapse to his own cogitations,
Of which not a gesture vouchsafed indica-
tions.

So again there was silence.

A timepiece at last

Struck the twelve strokes of midnight.

Roused by them, he cast

A half-look to the dial; then quietly threw
His arm round the neck of his cousin, and drew
The hands down from his face.

“It is time she should know

What has happen'd," he said, . . . "let us go
to her now."

Alfred started at once to his feet.

Drawn and wan
Though his face, he look'd more than his wont
was—a man.

Strong for once, in his weakness. Uplifted,
fill'd through

With a manly resolve.

If that axiom be true
Of the "*Sum quia cogito*," I must opine

That "*id sum quod cogito*:"—that which, in
fine,

A man thinks and feels, with his whole force
of thought

And feeling, the man is himself.

He had fought
With himself, and rose up from his self-over-
throw

The survivor of much which that strife had laid
low.

At his feet, as he rose at the name of his wife,
Lay in ruins the brilliant unrealized life

Which, though yet unfulfill'd, seem'd till then,
in that name,

To be his, had he claim'd it. The man's dream
of fame

And of power fell shatter'd before him; and
only

There rested the heart of the woman, so lonely
In all save the love he could give her. The
lord

Of that heart he arose. Blush not, Muse, to
record

That his first thought, and last, at that moment
was not

Of the power and fame that seem'd lost to his
lot.

But the love that was left to it; not of the self
He had cared for, yet squander'd; and not of
himself,

But of her; as he murmur'd,

“One moment, dear Jack!

We have grown up from boyhood together.

Our track

Has been through the same meadows in child-
hood: in youth

Through the same silent gateways, to manhood.

In truth,

There is none that can know me as you do;
and none

To whom I more wish to believe myself known.

Speak the truth; you are not wont to mince it,
I know.

Nor I, shall I shirk it, or shrink from it now.

In despite of a wanton behavior, in spite

Of vanity, folly, and pride, Jack, which might

Have turn'd from me many a heart strong and
true

As your own, I have never turn'd round and
miss'd YOU

From my side in one hour of affliction or doubt

By my own blind and heedless self-will brought
about.

Tell me truth. Do I owe this alone to the sake

Of those old recollections of boyhood that make

In your heart yet some clinging and crying
appeal

From a judgment more harsh, which I cannot
but feel
Might have sentenced our friendship to death
long ago?
Or is it . . . (I would I could deem it were so!)
That, not all overlaid by a listless exterior,
Your heart has divined in me something
superior
To that which I seem; from my innermost
nature
Not wholly expell'd by the world's usurpature?
Some instinct of earnestness, truth or desire
For truth? Some one spark of the soul's native
fire
Moving under the ashes, and cinders, and dust
Which life hath heap'd o'er it? Some one fact
to trust
And to hope in? Or by you alone am I deem'd
The mere frivolous fool I so often have seem'd
To my own self?"

JOHN.

No, Alfred! you will, I believe,
Be true, at the last, to what now makes you
grieve
For having belied your true nature so long
Necessity is a stern teacher. Be strong!

'Do you think,' he resumed . . . "what I
feel while I speak
Is no more than a transient emotion, as weak
As these weak tears would seem to betoken it?"

JOHN.

No.

ALFRED.

Thank you, cousin! your hand then. And
 now I will go
 Alone, Jack. Trust to me.

VIII.

JOHN.

I do. But 'tis late
 If she sleeps, you'll not wake her?

ALFRED.

No, no! it will wait
 (Poor infant) too surely, this mission of sorrow,
 If she sleeps, I will not mar her dreams of
 to-morrow.

He open'd the door, and pass'd out.

Cousin John
 Watch'd him wistful, and left him to seek her
 alone.

His heart beat so loud when he knock'd at her
 door,

He could hear no reply from within. Yet once
 more

He knock'd lightly. No answer. The handle
 he tried:

The door open'd: he enter'd the room unde-
 scribed.

X.

No brighter than is that dim circlet of light
 Which enhaloes the moon when rains form on
 the night,

The pale lamp an indistinct radiance shed
Round the chamber, in which, at her pure
snowy bed
Matilda was kneeling; so wrapt in deep prayer
That she knew not her husband stood watch-
ing her there.
With the lamplight the moonlight had mingled
a faint
And unearthly effulgence which seem'd to
acquaint
The whole place with a sense of deep peace
made secure
By the presence of something angelic and pure.
And not purer some angel Grief carves o'er
the tomb
Where love lies, than the lady that kneel'd in
that gloom.
She had put off her dress; and she look'd to
his eyes
Like a young soul escaped from its earthly dis-
guise;
Her fair neck and innocent shoulders were
bare,
And over them rippled her soft golden hair;
Her simple and slender white bodice unlaced
Confined not one curve of her delicate waist.
As the light that, from water reflected, forever
Trembles up through the tremulous reeds of a
river,
So the beam of her beauty went trembling in
him,
Through the thoughts it suffused with a sense
soft and dim.
Reproducing itself in the broken and bright

In its pressure on his, as the effort within it
Lived and died with each tender tumultuous
minute.

“O Alfred, O Alfred! forgive me, she cried
—“Forgive me!”

“Forgive you, my poor child!” he sigh’d;
“But I never have blamed you for aught that
I know,
And I have not one thought that reproaches
you now.”

From her arms he unwound himself gently.
And so

He forced her down softly beside him. Below
The canopy shading their couch, they sat down.
And he said, clasping firmly her hand in his
own,

“When a proud man, Matilda, has found out
at length,

That he is but a child in the midst of his
strength,

But a fool in his wisdom, to whom can he own
The weakness which thus to himself hath been
shown?

From whom seek the strength which his need
of is sore,

Although in his pride he might perish, before
He could plead for the one, or the other avow
'Mid his intimate friends? Wife of mine, tell
me now,

Do you join me in feeling, in that darken'd
hour,

The sole friend that can have the right or the
power

To be at his side, is the woman that shares

His fate, if he falter; the woman that bears
The name dear for her sake, and hallows the
life

She has mingled her own with,—in short, that
man's wife?"

"Yes," murmur'd Matilda, "O yes!"

"Then," he cried,
"This chamber in which we two sit, side by side
(And his arm, as he spoke, seem'd more softly
to press her),

Is now a confessional—you, my confessor!"

"I?" she falter'd, and timidly lifted her head.

"Yes! but first answer one other question," he
said:

"When a woman once feels that she is not
alone:

That the heart of another is warm'd by her
own

That another feels with her whatever she feel,
And halves her existence in woe or in weal;

That a man for her sake, well, so long as
he lives;

Lives to put forth his strength which the
thought of her gives;

Live to shield her from want, and to share with
her sorrow;

Live to solace the day, and provide for the
morrow:

Will that woman feel less than another, O say,
The loss of what life, sparing this, takes away?
Will she feel (feeling this), when calamities
come,

That they brighten the heart, though they
darken the home?"

She turn'd, like a soft rainy heav'n, on him
 Eyes that smiled through fresh tears, trustful,
 tender, and dim.

“That woman,” she murmur'd, “indeed, were
 thrice blest!”

“Then, courage, true wife of my heart!” to his
 breast

As he folded and gather'd her closely, he cried,
 “For the refuge, to-night in these arms open'd
 wide

To your heart, can be never closed to it again,
 And this room is for both an asylum! For
 when

I pass'd through that door, at the door I left
 there

A calamity sudden and heavy to bear.

One step from that threshold, and daily, I fear,
 We must face it henceforth; but it enters not
 here,

For that door shuts it out, and admits here
 alone

A heart which calamity leaves all your own!”

She started . . . “Calamity, Alfred, to you?”

“To both, my poor child, but 'twill bring with
 it too

The courage, I trust, to subdue it.”

“O speak!

Speak!” she falter'd in tones timid, anxious,
 and weak.

“O yet for a moment,” he said, “hear me on!
 Matilda, this morn we went forth in the sun,
 Like those children of sunshine, the bright
 summer flies,

That sport in the sunbeam, and play through
 the skies
 While the skies smile, and heed not each other;
 at last,
 When their sunbeam is gone, and their sky
 overcast,
 Who recks in what ruin they fold their wet
 wings?
 So, indeed, the morn found us,—poor frivolous
 things!
 Now our sky is o'ercast, and our sunbeam is
 set,
 And the night brings its darkness around us.
 Oh, yet
 Have we weather'd no storm through those
 twelve cloudless hours?
 Yes; you, too, have wept!
 “While the world was yet ours,
 While its sun was upon us, its incense stream'd
 to us,
 And its myriad voices of joy seem'd to woo us,
 We stray'd from each other, too far, it may
 be,
 Nor, wantonly wandering, then did I see
 How deep was my need of thee, dearest, how
 great
 Was thy claim on my heart and thy share in
 my fate!
 But, Matilda, an angel was near us, mean-
 while,
 Watching o'er us to warn, and to rescue!
 “That smile
 Which you saw with suspicion, that presence
 you eyed

With resentment, an angel's they were at your
side

And at mine: nor perchance is the day all so
far

When we both in our prayers, when most
heartfelt they are,

May murmur the name of that woman now
gone

From our sight evermore.

“Here, this evening, alone,
I seek your forgiveness, in opening my heart
Unto yours,—from this clasp be it never to
part!

Matilda, the fortune you brought me is gone,
But a prize richer far than that fortune has
won

It is yours to confer, and I kneel for that prize,
‘Tis the heart of my wife!” With suffused
happy eyes

She sprang from her seat, flung her arms wide
apart,

And tenderly closing them round him, his
heart

Clasp'd in one close embrace to her bosom;
and there

Droop'd her head on his shoulder; and sobb'd.
Not despair,

Not sorrow, not even the sense of her loss,
Flow'd in those happy tears, so oblivious she
was

Of all save the sense of her own love! Anon,
However, his words rush'd back to her. “All
gone,

The fortune you brought me!”

And eyes that were dim
 With soft tears she upraised: but those tears
 were for him.

“Gone! my husband?” she said, “tell me all!
 see! I need,
 To sober this rapture, so selfish indeed,
 Fuller sense of affliction.”

“Poor innocent child!”

He kiss'd her fair forehead, and mournfully
 smiled,
 As he told her the tale he had heard—some-
 thing more
 The gain found in loss of what gain lost of
 yore.

“Rest, my heart, and my brain, and my right
 hand for you;
 And with these, my Matilda, what may I not
 do?

And know not, I knew not myself till this hour,
 Which so sternly reveal'd it, my nature's full
 power.”

“And I, too,” she murmur'd, “I, too, am no
 more

The mere infant at heart you have known me
 before.

I have suffer'd since then. I have learn'd
 much in life.

O take, with the faith I have pledged as a
 wife,

The heart I have learn'd as a woman to feel!
 For I—love you, my husband!”

As though to conceal
 Less from him, than herself, with that motion
 express'd,

She dropp'd her bright head, and hid all on
his breast.

“O lovely as woman, beloved as wife!
Evening star of my heart, light forever my
life!

If from eyes fix'd too long on this base earth
thus far

You have miss'd your due homage, dear guar-
dian star,

Believe that, uplifting those eyes unto heaven,
There I see you, and know you, and bless the
light given

To lead me to life's late achievement; my own,
My blessing, my treasure, my all things in
one!”

XII.

How lovely she look'd in the lovely moonlight,
That stream'd thro' the pane from the blue
balmy night!

How lovely she look'd in her own lovely youth,
As she clung to his side full of trust and of
truth!

How lovely to him, as he tenderly press'd
Her young head on his bosom, and sadly ca-
ress'd

The glittering tresses which now shaken loose
Shower'd gold in his hand, as he smooth'd
them!

XIII.

O Muse,

Interpose not one pulse of thine own beating
heart

'Twi'xt these two silent souls! There's a joy
beyond art,
And beyond sound the music it makes in the
breast.

XIV.

Here were lovers twice wed, that were happy
at least!
No music, save such as the nightingales sung,
Breath'd their bridals abroad; and no cresset,
up-hung,
Lit that festival hour, save what soft light was
given
From the pure stars that peopled the deep-
purple heaven.
He open'd the casement: he led her with him,
Hush'd in heart, to the terrace, dipp'd cool in
the dim
Lustrous gloom of the shadowy laurels. They
heard
Aloof, the invisible, rapturous bird,
With her wild note bewildering the woodlands;
they saw
Not unheard, afar off, the hill-rivulet draw
His long ripple of moon-kindled wavelets with
cheer
From the throat of the vale; o'er the dark
sapphire sphere
The mild, multitudinous lights lay asleep,
Pastured free on the midnight, and bright as
the sheep
Of Apollo in pastoral Thrace; from unknown
Hollow glooms freshen'd odors around them
were blown

Intermittingly; then the moon dropp'd from
 their sight,
 Immersed in the mountains, and put out the
 light
 Which no longer they needed to read on the
 face
 Of each other's life's last revelation.

The place

Slept sumptuous round them; and Nature,
 that never
 Sleeps, but waking reposes, with patient en-
 deavor
 Continued about them, unheeded, unseen,
 Her old, quiet toil in the heart of the green
 Summer silence, preparing new buds for new
 blossoms,
 And stealing a finger of change o'er the bosoms
 Of the unconscious woodlands; and Time, that
 halts not
 His forces, how lovely soever the spot
 Where their march lies—the wary, gray strat-
 egist, Time,
 With the armies of Life, lay encamp'd—Grief
 and Crime,
 Love and Faith, in the darkness unheeded;
 maturing,
 For his great war with men, new surprises:
 securing
 All outlets, pursuing and pushing his foe
 To his last narrow refuge—the grave.

xv.

Sweetly though

Smiled the stars like new hopes out of heaven,
 and sweetly
 Their hearts beat thanksgiving for all things,
 completely
 Confiding in that yet untrodden existence
 Over which they were pausing. To-morrow,
 resistance
 And struggle; to-night, Love his hallow'd de-
 vice
 Hung forth, and proclaim'd his serene armis-
 tice.

CANTO V.

I.

When Lucile left Matilda, she sat for long
 hours
 In her chamber, fatigued by long overwrought
 powers,
 'Mid the signs of departure, about to turn back
 To her old vacant life, on her old homeless
 track.
 She felt her heart falter within her. She sat
 Like some poor player, gazing dejectedly at
 The insignia of royalty worn for a night,
 Exhausted, fatigued, with the dazzle and light.
 And the effort of passionate feigning; who
 thinks
 Of her own meager, rush-lighted garret, and
 shrinks
 From the chill of the change that awaits her.

II.

From these
Oppressive, and comfortless, blank reveries
Unable to sleep, she descended the stair
That led from her room to the garden.

The air,
With the chill of the dawn, yet unris'n but at
hand,

Strangely smote on her feverish forehead.

The land
Lay in darkness and change, like a world in
its grave:

No sound, save the voice of the long river
wave

And the crickets that sing all the night!

She stood still,
Vaguely watching the thin cloud that curl'd
on the hill.

Emotions, long pent in her breast, were at
stir,

And the deeps of the spirit were troubled in
her.

Ah, pale woman! what, with that heart-broken
look,

Didst thou read then in nature's weird heart-
breaking book?

Have the wild rains of heaven a father? and
who

Hath in pity begotten the drops of the dew?

Orion, Arcturus, who pilots them both?

What leads forth in his season the bright Maz-
aroth?

Hath the darkness a dwelling,—save there, in
those eyes?

And what name hath that half-reveal'd hope
in the skies?

Ay, question, and listen! What answer?

The sound
Of the long river wave through its stone-
troubled bound,
And the crickets that sing all the night.

There are hours
Which belong to unknown, supernatural
powers

Whose sudden and solemn suggestions are all
That to this race of worms,—stinging creat-
ures, that crawl,

Lie, and fear, and die daily, beneath their
own stings,—

Can excuse the blind boast of inherited wings.
When the soul, on the impulse of anguish,
hath pass'd

Beyond anguish, and risen into rapture at last;
When she traverses nature and space, till she
stands

In the Chamber of Fate; where, through tremu-
lous hands,

Hum the threads from an old-fashion'd distaff
uncurl'd.

And those three blind old women sit spinning
the world.

III.

The dark was blanch'd, wan, overhead. One
green star

Was slipping from sight in the pale void afar;
The spirit of change, and of awe, with faint
breath,

Were shifting the midnight, above and be-
neath.

The spirits of awe and of change were around
And about, and upon her.

A dull muffled sound,
And a hand on her hand, like a ghostly sur-
prise,

And she felt herself fix'd by the hot hollow
eyes

Of the Frenchman before her: those eyes
seemed to burn,

And scorch out the darkness between them,
and turn,

Into fire as they fix'd her. He look'd like the
shade

Of a creature by fancy some solitude made,
And sent forth by the darkness to scare and
oppress

Some soul of a monk in a waste wilderness.

IV.

“At last, then,—at last, and alone,—I and thou,
Lucile de Nevers, have we met?

“Hush! I know
Not for me was the tryst. Never mind! it is
mine;

And whatever led hither those proud steps of
thine,

They remove not, until we have spoken. My
hour

Is come; and it holds me and thee in its power,
As the darkness holds both the horizons. 'Tis
well!

The timidest maiden that e'er to the spell

Of her first lover's vows listen'd, hush'd with
 delight,
 When soft stars are brightly uphanging in the
 night,
 Never listen'd, I swear, more unquestion-
 ingly,
 Than thy fate hath compell'd thee to listen to
 me!"

To the sound of his voice, as though out of a
 dream,
 She appear'd with a start to awaken.

The stream,

When he ceased, took the night with its moan-
 ing again,
 Like the voices of spirits departing in pain.
 "Continue," she answer'd, "I listen to hear."
 For a moment he did not reply.

Through the drear

And dim light between them, she saw that
 his face
 Was disturb'd. To and fro he continued to
 pace,
 With his arms folded close, and the low rest-
 less stride
 Of a panther, in circles around her, first wide,
 Then narrower, nearer, and quicker. At last
 He stood still, and one long look upon her he
 cast,
 "Lucile, dost thou dare to look into my face?
 Is the sight so repugnant? ha, well! canst
 thou trace
 One word of thy writing in this wicked scroll,
 With thine own name scrawl'd through it, de-
 facing a soul?"

In his face there was something so wrathful
and wild,
That the sight of it scared her.

He saw it, and smiled,
And then turn'd him from her, renewing
again

That short restless stride; as though searching
in vain

For the point of some purpose within him.

“Lucile,
You shudder to look in my face: do you feel
No reproach when you look in your own
heart?”

“No, Duke,
In my conscience I do not deserve your rebuke:
Not yours!” she replied.

“No,” he mutter'd again,
“Gentle justice! you first bid Life hope not,
and then
To Despair you say ‘Act not!’ ”

v.

He watch'd her awhile
With a chill sort of restless and suffering smile.
They stood by the wall of the garden. The
skies,
Dark, somber, were troubled with vague proph-
ecies
Of the dawn yet far distant. The moon had
long set,
And all in a glimmering light, pale, and wet
With the night-dews, the white roses sullenly
loom'd

Round about her. She spoke not. At length
he resumed,

“Wretched creatures we are! I and thou—one
and all!

Only able to injure each other and fall
Soon or late, in that void which ourselves we
prepare

For the souls that we boast of! weak insects
we are!

O heaven! and what has become of them? all
Those instincts of Eden surviving the Fall:
That glorious faith in inherited things:
That sense in the soul of the length of her
wings;

Gone! all gone! and the wail of the night wind
sounds human,

Bewailing those once nightly visitants! Woman
Woman, what hast thou done with my youth?
Give again,

Give me back the young heart that I gave
thee . . . in vain!”

“Duke!” she falter’d.

“Yes, yes!” he went on, “I was not
Always thus! what I once was I have not for-
got.”

VI.

As the wind that heaps sand in a desert, there
stirr’d

Through his voice an emotion that swept every
word

Into one angry wail; as, with feverish change,
He continued his monologue, fitful and strange.

“Woe to him in whose nature, once kindl’d,
the torch

Of Passion burns downward to blacken and
scorch!
But shame, shame and sorrow, O woman, to
thee
Whose hand sow'd the seed of destruction in
me!
Whose lip taught the lesson of falsehood to
mine!
Whose looks made me doubt lies that look'd so
divine."
My soul by thy beauty was slain in its sleep:
And if tears I mistrust, 'tis that thou too canst
weep!
Well! . . . how utter soever it be, one mistake
In the love of a man, what more change need
it make
In the steps of his soul through the course
love began,
Than all other mistakes in the life of a man?
And I said to myself, "I am young yet: too
young
To have wholly survived my own portion
among
The great needs of man's life, or exhausted its
joys;
What is broken? one only of youth's pleasant
toys!
Shall I be the less welcome, wherever I go,
For one passion survived? No! the roses will
blow
As of yore, as of yore will the nightingales
sing,
Not less sweetly for one blossom cancel'd from
Spring!

Hast thou loved, O my heart? to thy love yet
remains
All the wide loving-kindness of nature. The
plains
And the hills with each summer their verdure
renew
Would thou be as they are? do thou then as
they do,
Let the dead sleep in peace. Would the living
divine
Where they slumber? Let only new flowers
be the sign!"

"Vain! all vain! . . . For when, laughing, the
wine I would quaff
I remember'd too well all it cost me to laugh.
Through the revel it was but the old song I
heard,
Through the crowd the old footsteps behind
me they stirr'd,
In the night-wind, the starlight, the murmurs
of even
In the ardors of earth, and the languors of
heaven,
I could trace nothing more, nothing more
through the spheres,
But the sound of old sobs, and the track of old
tears!
It was with me the night long in dreaming or
waking,
It abided in loathing, when daylight was
breaking,
The burden of the bitterness in me! Behold,
All my days were become as a tale that is told.

And I said to my sight, "No good thing shalt
 thou see,
 For the noonday is turned to darkness in me.
 In the house of Oblivion my bed I have made."
 And I said to the grave, 'Lo, my father!' and
 said
 To the worm, 'Lo, my sister!' The dust to
 the dust,
 And one end to the wicked shall be with the
 just!"

VII.

He ceased, as a wind that wails out on the
 night,
 And moans itself mute. Through the indis-
 tinct light
 A voice clear, and tender, and pure with a tone
 Of ineffable pity replied to his own.
 "And say you, and deem you, that I wreck'd
 your life?
 Alas! Duc de Luvois, had I been your wife
 By a fraud of the heart which could yield you
 alone
 For the love in your nature a lie in my own,
 Should I not, in deceiving, have injured you
 worse?
 Yes, I then should have merited justly your
 curse,
 For I then should have wrong'd you!"
 "Wrong'd! ah, is it so?
 You could never have loved me?"
 "Duke!"
 "Never? oh, no!"

(He broke into a fierce, angry laugh, as he said)

“Yet, lady, you knew that I loved you: you led
My love on to lay to its heart, hour by hour,
All the pale, cruel, beautiful, passionless
power

Shut up in that cold face of yours! was this
well?

But enough! not on you would I vent the wild
hell

Which has grown in my heart. Oh, that man,
first and last

He tramples in triumph my life! he has cast
His shadow 'twixt me and the sun . . . let it
pass!

My hate yet may find him!”

She murmur'd, “Alas!

These words, at least, spare me the pain of re-
ply.

Enough, Duc de Luvois! farewell. I shall try
To forget every word I have heard, every sight
That has grieved and appall'd me in this
wretched night

Which must witness our final farewell. May
you, Duke,

Never know greater cause your own heart to
rebuke

Than mine thus to wrong and afflict you have
had!

Adieu!”

“Stay, Lucile, stay!” . . . he groaned, “I am
mad,

Brutalized, blind with pain! I know not what
I said.

I meant it not, but'' (he moan'd, drooping
his head)

''Forgive me! I—have I so wrong'd you, Lu-
cile?

I . . . have I . . . forgive me, forgive me!''
''I feel

Only sad, very sad to the soul,'' she said, ''far,
Far too sad for resentment.''

''Yet stand as you are
One moment,'' he murmur'd. ''I think, could
I gaze

Thus awhile on your face, the old innocent
days

Would come back upon me, and this scorching
heart

Free itself in hot tears. Do not, do not depart
Thus, Lucile! stay one moment. I know why
you shrink,

Why you shudder; I read in your face what
you think.

Do not speak to me of it. And yet, if you will,
Whatever you say, my own lips shall be still.
I lied. And the truth, now, could justify
nought.

There are battles, it may be, in which to have
fought

Is more shameful than, simply, to fail. Yet,
Lucile,

Had you help'd me to bear what you forced me
to feel—''

''Could I help you,'' she murmur'd, ''but what
can I say

That your life will respond to?'' ''My life?''
he sigh'd ''Nay,

My life hath brought forth only evil, and there
 The wild wind hath planted the wild weed:
 yet ere

You exclaim, 'Fling the weed to the flames,'
 think again

Why the field is so barren. With all other men
 First love, though it perish from life, only goes
 Like the primrose that falls to make way for
 the rose.

For a man at least most men, may love on
 through life:

Love in fame; love in knowledge; in work:
 earth is rife

With labor, and therefore, with love, for a man.
 If one love fails, another succeeds, and the
 plan

Of man's life includes love in all objects! But
 I?

All such loves from my life through its whole
 destiny

Fate excluded. The love that I gave you, alas!
 Was the sole love that life gave to me. Let
 that pass!

It perish'd and all perish'd with it. Ambition?
 Wealth left nothing to add to my social condi-
 tion.

Fame? But fame in itself presupposes some
 great

Field wherein to pursue and attain it. The
 State?

I, to cringe to an upstart? The Camp? I, to
 draw

From its sheath the old sword of the Dukes of
 Luvois

'To defend usurpation? Books, then? Science,
 Art?
 But, alas! I was fashion'd for action: my
 heart,
 Wither'd thing though it be, I should hardly
 compress
 'Twixt the leaves of a treatise on Statics: life's
 stress
 Needs scope, not contraction! what rests? to
 wear out
 At some dark northern court an existence, no
 doubt,
 In wretched and paltry intrigues for a cause
 As hopeless as in my own life! By the laws
 Of a fate I can neither control nor dispute,
 I am what I am!"

VIII.

For a while she was mute.
 Then she answer'd, "We are our own fates.
 Our own deeds
 Are our doomsmen. Man's life was made not
 for men's creeds
 But men's action. And, Duc de Luvois, I
 might say
 That all life attests, that 'the will makes the
 way.'
 Is the land of our birth less the land of our
 birth,
 Or its claim the less strong, or its cause the less
 worth
 Our upholding, because the white lily no more
 Is as sacred as all that it bloom'd for of yore?
 Yet be that as it may be; I cannot perchance

Judge this matter. I am but a woman, and
France
Has for me simpler duties. Large hope, though
Eugene
De Luvois, should be yours. There is purpose
in pain,
Otherwise it were devilish. I trust in my soul
That the great master hand which sweeps over
the whole
Of this deep harp of life, if at moments it
stretch
To shrill tension some one wailing nerve,
means to fetch
Its response the truest, most stringent, and
smart,
Its pathos the purest, from out the wrung
heart
Whose faculties, flaccid it may be, if less
Sharply strung, sharply smitten, had fail'd to
express
Just the one note the great final harmony
needs.
And what best proves there's life in a heart?
—that it bleeds?
Grant a cause to remove, grant an end to at-
tain,
Grant both to be just, and what mercy in pain!
Cease to sin with the sorrow! See morning
begin!
Pain must burn itself out if not fuel'd by sin.
There is hope in yon hill-tops, and love in yon
light.
Let hate and despondency die with the night!"

He was moved by her words. As some poor
wretch confined

In cells loud with meaningless laughter, whose
mind

Wanders trackless amidst its own ruins, may
hear

A voice heard long since, silenced many a year,
And now, 'mid mad ravings recaptured again,
Sing through the caged lattice a once well-
known strain,

Which brings back his boyhood upon it, until
The mind's ruin'd crevices graciously fill
With music and memory, and as it were,
The long-troubled spirit grows slowly aware
Of the mockery round it, and shrinks from each
thing

It once sought,—the poor idiot who pass'd for
a king,

Hard by, with his squalid straw crown, now
confess'd

A madman more painfully mad than the rest,—
So the sound of her voice, as it there wander'd
o'er

His echoing heart, seem'd in part to restore
The forces of thought: he recaptured the whole
Of his life by the light which, in passing, her
soul

Reflected on his: he appear'd to awake
From a dream, and perceived he had dream'd
a mistake:

His spirit was soften'd yet troubled in him:
He felt his lips falter, his eyesight grow dim,
But he murmur'd . . .

“Lucile, not for me that sun's light

Which reveals—not restores—the wild havoc of
 night.
 There are some creatures born for the night,
 not the day.
 Broken-hearted the nightingale hides in the
 spray,
 And the owl's moody mind in his own hollow
 tower
 Dwells muffled. Be darkness henceforward
 my dower.
 Light, be sure, in that darkness there dwells,
 by which eyes
 Grown familiar with ruins may yet recognize
 Enough desolation."

IX.

The pride that claims here
 On earth to itself (howsoever severe
 To itself it may be) God's dread office and right
 Of punishing sin, is a sin in heaven's sight,
 And against heaven's service.

"Eugene de Luvois,
 Leave the judgment to Him who alone knows
 the law.
 Surely no man can be his own judge, least of
 all
 His own doomsman."

Her words seem'd to fall
 With the weight of tears in them.
 He look'd up, and saw
 That sad serene countenance, mournful as
 law
 And tender as pity, bow'd o'er him: and heard
 In some thicket the matinal chirp of a bird.

x.

“Vulgar natures alone suffer vainly.

“Eugene,”

She continued, “in life we have met once
again,

And once more life parts us. Yon day-spring
for me

Lifts the vail of a future in which it may be
We shall meet nevermore. Grant, oh grant to
me yet

The belief that it is not in vain we have met!
I plead for the future. A new horoscope
I would cast: will you read it? I plead for a
hope:

I plead for a memory; yours, yours alone,
To restore or to spare. Let the hope be your
own,

Be the memory mine.

“Once of yore, when for man
Faith yet lived, ere this age of the sluggard
began,

Men, aroused to the knowledge of evil, fled far
From the fading rose-gardens of sense to the
war

With the Pagan, the cave in the desert, and
sought

Not repose, but employment in action or
thought,

Life's strong earnest, in all things! oh think
not of me,

But yourself! for I plead for your own destiny:
I plead for your life, with its duties undone,
With its claims unappeased, and its trophies
unwon;

And in pleading for life's fair fulfillment, I
plead
For all that you miss, and for all that you
need."

XI.

Through the calm crystal air, faint and fair,
as she spoke,
A clear, chilly chime from a church-turret
broke;
And the sound of her voice, with the sound of
the bell,
On his ear where he kneel'd, softly, soothingly
fell.
All within him was wild and confused, as within
A chamber deserted in some roadside inn,
Where, passing, wild traveler paused, over-
night,
To quaff and carouse; in each socket each
light
Is extinct; crash'd the glasses, and scrawl'd is
the wall
With wild ribald ballads; serenely o'er all.
For the first time perceived, where the dawn-
light creeps faint
Through the wrecks of that orgy, the face of
a saint
Seen through some broken frame, appears not-
ing meanwhile
The ruin all round with a sorrowful smile.
And he gazed round. The curtains of Dark-
ness half drawn
Oped behind her; and pure as the pure light
of dawn

She stood, bathed in morning, and seem'd to
 his eyes
 From their sight to be melting away in the
 skies
 That expand around her.

XII.

There pass'd through his head
 A fancy—a vision. That woman was dead
 He had loved long ago—loved and lost! dead
 to him,
 Dead to all the life left him; but there, in the
 dim
 Dewy light of the dawn, stood a spirit; 'twas
 hers;
 And he said to the soul of Lucile de Nevers:
 “O soul to its sources departing away!
 Pray for mine, if one soul for another may
 pray.
 I to ask have no right, thou to give hast no
 power,
 One hope to my heart. But in this parting
 hour
 I name not my heart and I speak not to thine.
 Answer, soul of Lucile, to this dark soul of
 mine,
 Does not soul owe to soul, what to heart heart
 denies,
 Hope, when hope is salvation? Behold, in yon
 skies,
 This wild night is passing away while I speak:
 Lo, above us, the day-spring beginning to
 break!

Something wakens within me, and warms to
the beam.

Is it hope that awakens? or do I but dream?
I know not. It may be, perchance, the first
spark

Of a new light within me to solace the dark
Unto which I return; or perchance it may be
The last spark of fires half extinguish'd in me.
I know not. Thou goest thy way: I my own;
For good or for evil, I know not. Alone
This I know we are parting. I wish'd to say
more,

But no matter! 'twill pass. All between us is
o'er.

Forget the wild words of to-night. 'Twas the
pain

For long years hoarded up, that rush'd from
me again.

I was unjust: forgive me. Spare now to re-
prove

Other words, other deeds. It was madness,
not love,

That you thwarted this night. What is done
is now done.

Death remains to avenge it, or life to atone.
I was madden'd! delirious! I saw you return
To him—not to me; and I felt my heart burn
With a fierce thirst for vengeance—and thus
. . . let it pass!

Long thoughts these, and so brief the mo-
ments, alas!

Thou goest thy way, and I mine. I suppose
'Tis to meet nevermore. Is it not so? Who
knows,

Or who heeds, where the exile from Paradise
 flies?
 Or what altars of his in the desert may rise?
 It is not so, Lucile? Well, well! Thus then
 we part
 Once again, soul from soul, as before heart
 from heart!"

xiii.

And again, clearer far than the chime of the
 bell,
 That voice on his sense softly, soothingly fell.
 "Our two paths must part us, Eugene; for my
 own
 Seems no more through that world in which
 henceforth alone
 You must work out (as now I believe that you
 will)
 The hope which you speak of. That work I
 shall still
 (If I live) watch and welcome, and bless far
 away.
 Doubt not this. But mistake not the thought,
 if I say
 That the great moral combat between human
 life
 And each human soul must be single. The
 strife
 None can share, though by all its results may
 be known.
 When the soul arms for battle, she goes forth
 alone.
 I say not, indeed, we shall meet nevermore,

For I know not. But meet, as we have met of
yore,
I know that we cannot. Perchance we may
meet
By the death-bed, the tomb, in the crowd, in
the street,
Or in solitude even, but never again
Shall we meet from henceforth as we have
met, Eugene.
For we know not the way we are going, nor
yet
Where our two ways may meet, or may cross.
Life hath set
No landmarks before us. But this, this alone,
I will promise: whatever your path, or my
own,
If, for once in the conflict before you, it chance
That the Dragon prevail, and with cleft shield,
and lance
Lost or shatter'd, borne down by the stress of
the war,
You falter and hesitate, if from afar
I, still watching (unknown to yourself, it may
be)
O'er the conflict to which I conjure you, should
see
That my presence could rescue, support you,
or guide
In the hour of that need I shall be at your side,
To warn, if you will, or incite, or control;
And again, once again, we shall meet, soul to
soul!"

XIV.

The voice ceased.

He uplifted his eyes.

All alone

He stood on the bare edge of dawn. She was
gone

Like a star, when up bay after bay of the
night,

Ripples in, wave on wave, the broad ocean of
light.

And at once, in her place, was the Sunrise! It
rose

In its sumptuous splendor and solemn repose,
The supreme revelation of light. Domes of
gold,

Realms of rose, in the Orient! And breath-
less, and bold,

While the great gates of heaven roll'd back
one by one,

The bright herald angel stood stern in the sun!
Thrice holy Eospheros! Light's reign began
In the heaven, on the earth, in the heart of
the man.

The dawn on the mountains! the dawn every-
where!

Light! silence! the fresh innovations of air!

O earth, and O ether! A butterfly breeze
Floated up, flutter'd down, and poised blithe
on the trees.

Through the reveling woods, o'er the sharp-
rippled stream,

Up the vale slow uncoiling itself out of dream,
Around the brown meadows adown the hill-
slope,

The spirits of morning were whispering
 "Hope!"

xv.

He uplifted his eyes. In the place where she
 stood

But a moment before, and where now roll'd
 the flood

Of the sunrise all golden, he seem'd to behold,
 In the young light of sunrise, an image unfold
 Of his own youth,—its ardors—its promise of
 fame—

Its ancestral ambition; and France by the
 name

Of his sires seem'd to call him. There, hover'd
 in light,

That image aloft, o'er the shapeless and bright
 And Aureorean clouds, which themselves
 seem'd to be

Brilliant fragments of that golden world,
 wherein he

Had once dwelt, a native!

There, rooted and bound
 To the earth, stood the man, gazing at it!

Around
 The rims of the sunrise it hover'd and shone
 Transcendent, that type of a youth that was
 gone:

And he—as the body may yearn for the soul,
 Lo, he yearn'd to embody that image. His
 whole

Heart arose to regain it.

"And is it too late?"

No! for Time is a fiction, and limits not fate.

Thought alone is eternal. Time thralls it in
vain.

For the thought that springs upward and
yearns to regain

The pure source of spirit, there is no Too Late.
As the stream to its first mountain levels,
elate

In the fountain arises, the spirit in him
Arose to that image. The image waned dim
Into heaven; and heavenward with it, to melt
As it melted, in day's broad expansion, he felt
With a thrill, sweet and strange, and intense—
awed, amazed—

Something soar and ascend in his soul, as he
gazed.

CANTO VI.

I.

Man is born on a battle-field. Round him, to
rend

Or resist, the dread Powers he displaces attend,
By the cradle which Nature, amidst the stern
shocks

That have shatter'd creation, and shapen it,
rocks.

He leaps with a wail into being; and lo!
His own mother, fierce Nature herself, is his
foe.

Her whirlwinds are roused into wrath o'er his
head:

'Neath his feet roll her earthquakes: her soli-
tudes spread

To daunt him: her forces dispute his command:
 Her snows fall to freeze him: her suns burn
 to brand:

Her seas yawn to engulf him: her rocks rise to
 crush:

And the lion and leopard, allied, lurk to rush
 On their startled invader.

In lone Malabar,
 Where the infinite forest spreads breathless
 and far,

'Mid the cruel of eye and the stealthy of claw
 (Striped and spotted destroyers!) he sees, pale
 with awe.

On the menacing edge of a fiery sky
 Grim Doorga, blue limb'd and red-handed, go
 by,

And the first thing he worships is Terror.

Anon,

Still impell'd by necessity hungrily on,
 He conquers the realms of his own self-reli-
 ance,

And the last cry of fear wakes the first of de-
 fiance,

From the serpent he crushes its poisonous soul:
 Smitten down in his path see the dead lion roll!
 On toward Heaven the son of Alcmena strides
 high on

The heads of the Hydra, the spoils of the lion:
 And man, conquering terror, is worship'd by
 man.

A camp has this world been since first it be-
 gan!

From his tents sweeps the roving Arabian; at
 peace,
A mere wandering shepherd that follows the
 fleece;
But, warring his way through a world's des-
 tinies,
Lo, from Delhi, from Bagdad, from Cordova,
 rise
Domes of empiry, dower'd with science and art,
Schools, libraries, forums, the palace, the mart!

New realms to man's soul have been con-
 quer'd. But those
Forthwith they are peopled for man by new
 foes!
The stars keep their secrets, the earth hides
 her own,
And bold must the man be that braves the Un-
 known!
Not a truth has to art or to science been given,
But brows have ached for it, and souls toil'd
 and striven;
And many have striven, and many have fail'd,
And many died, slain by the truth they assail'd.
But when Man has tamed Nature, asserted his
 place
And dominion, behold! he is brought face to
 face
With a new foe—himself!
 Nor may man on his shield
Ever rest, for his foe is forever a field,
Danger ever at hand, till the armed Archangel
Sound o'er him the trump of earth's final
 evangel.

II.

Silence straightway, stern Muse, the soft cym-
bals of pleasure,

Be all bronzen these numbers, and martial the
measure!

Breathe, sonorously breathe, o'er the spirit in
me

One strain, sad and stern, of that deep Epopee
Which thou, from the fashionless cloud of far
time,

Chantest lonely, when Victory, pale, and sub-
lime

In the light of the aureole over her head,
Hears, and heeds not the wound in her heart
fresh and red.

Blown wide by the blare of the clarion, unfold
The shrill clanging curtains of war!

And behold

A vision!

The antique Heracleean seats;
And the long Black Sea billow that once bore
those fleets,

Which said to the winds, "Be ye, too, Geno-
ese!"

And the red angry sands of the chafed Cher-
onese;

And the two foes of man, War and Winter,
allied

Round the Armies of England and France, side
by side

Enduring and dying (Gaul and Briton abreast!)
Where the towers of the North fret the skies
of the East.

III.

Since that sunrise, which rose through the
 calm linden stems
 O'er Lucile and Eugene, in the garden at Ems,
 Through twenty-five seasons encircling the sun,
 This planet of ours on its pathway hath gone,
 And the fates that I sing of have flowed with
 the fates
 Of a world, in the red wake of war, round the
 gates
 Of that doom'd and heroical city, in which
 (Fire crowning the rampart, blood bathing the
 ditch!)
 At bay, fights the Russian as some hunted
 bear,
 Whom the huntsmen have hemm'd round at
 last in his lair.

IV.

A fang'd, arid plain, sapp'd with unground
 fire,
 Soak'd with snow, torn with shot, mash'd to
 one gory mire!
 There Fate's iron scale hangs in horrid sus-
 pense,
 While those two famish'd ogres—the Siege,
 the Defense,
 Face to face, through a vapor frore, dismal and
 dun,
 Glare, scenting the breath of each other.

The one

Double-bodied, two-headed—by separate ways
 Winding, serpent-wise, nearer; the other, each
 day's

VI.

So the day—so the night! So by night, so by
 day,
 With stern patient pathos, while time wears
 away,
 In the trench flooded through, in the wind
 where it wails.
 In the snow where it falls, in the fire where it
 hails
 Shot and shell—link by link, out of hardship
 and pain.
 Toil, sickness, endurance, is forged the bronze
 chain
 Of those terrible siege-lines!
No change to that toil
 Save the mine's sudden leap from the treacher-
 ous soil,
 Save the midnight attack, save the groans of
 the maim'd,
 And Death's daily obolous due, whether claim'd
 By man or by nature.

VII.

Time passes. The dumb,
 Bitter, snow-bound, and sullen November is
 come.
 And its snows have been bathed in the blood
 of the brave;
 And many a young heart has glutted the
 grave:
 And on Inkerman yet the wild bramble is gory,
 And those bleak heights henceforth shall be
 famous in story.

VIII.

The moon, swathed in storm, has long set:
 through the camp

No sound save the sentinel's slow sullen tramp,
 The distant explosion, the wild sleety wind,
 That seems searching for something it never
 can find.

The midnight is turning: the lamp is nigh
 spent:

And, wounded and lone, in a desolate tent
 Lies a young British soldier whose sword . . .

In this place,

However, my Muse is compell'd to retrace
 Her precipitous steps and revert to the past.
 The shock which had suddenly shatter'd at last
 Alfred Vargrave's fantastical holiday nature,
 Had sharply drawn forth to his full size and
 stature

The real man, conceal'd till that moment be-
 neath

All he yet had appeared. From the gay broid-
 er'd sheath

Which a man in his wrath flings aside, even so
 Leaps the keen trenchant steel summon'd forth
 by a blow.

And thus loss or fortune gave value to life
 The wife gain'd a husband, the husband a wife,
 In that home which, though humbled and nar-
 row'd by fate,

Was enlarged and ennobled by love. Low
 their state,

But large their possessions.

Sir Ridley, forgiven

By those unwittingly brought nearer heaven
 By one fraudulent act, than through all his
 sleek speech

The hypocrite brought his own soul, safe from
 reach

Of the law, died abroad.

Cousin John, heart and hand,
 Purse and person, henceforth (honest man!)
 took his stand

By Matilda and Alfred; guest, guardian, and
 friend

Of the home he both shared and assured, to
 the end,

With his large lively love. Alfred Vargrave
 meanwhile

Faced the world's frown, consoled by his wife's
 faithful smile

Late in life, he began life in earnest; and still
 With the tranquil exertion of resolute will,

Through long, and laborious, and difficult days,
 Out of manifold failure, by wearisome ways,

Work'd his way through the world; till at last
 he began

(Reconciled to the work which mankind claims
 for man),

After years of unwitness'd, unwearied en-
 deavor,

Years impassion'd yet patient, to realize ever
 More clear on the broad stream of current
 opinion

The reflex of powers in himself—that dominion
 Which the life of one man, if his life be a truth,
 May assert o'er the life of mankind. Thus, his
 youth

In his manhood renew'd, fame and fortune he
won

Working only for home, love, and duty.

One son
Matilda had borne him; but scarce had the
boy,

With all Eton yet fresh in his full heart's frank
joy,

The darling of young soldier comrades, just
glanced

Down the glad dawn of manhood at life, when
it chanced

That a blight sharp and sudden was breath'd
o'er the bloom

Of his joyous and generous years, and the
gloom

Of a grief premature on their fair promise
fell:

No light cloud like those which, for June to
dispel,

Captious April engenders; but deep as his own
Deep nature. Meanwhile, ere I fully make
known

The cause of this sorrow, I track the event.

When first a wild war-note through England
was sent,

He, transferring without either token or word
To friend, parent, or comrade, a yet virgin
sword,

From a holiday troop, to one bound for the war,
Had march'd forth, with his eyes that saw
death in the star

Whence others sought glory. Thus fighting,
he fell

On the red field of Inkerman; found, who can
 tell
 By what miracle, breathing, though shatter'd,
 and borne
 To the rear by his comrades, pierced, bleeding
 and torn,
 Where for long days and nights, with the
 wound in his side,
 He lay, dark.

IX.

But a wound deeper far, undescried,
 The young heart was rankling; for there, of a
 truth,
 In the first earnest faith of a pure pensive
 youth,
 A love large as life, deep and changeless as
 death,
 Lay ensheath'd: and that love, ever fretting its
 sheath,
 The frail scabbard of life pierced and wore
 through and through.
 There are loves in man's life for which time
 can renew
 All that time may destroy. Lives there are,
 though, in love,
 Which cling to one faith, and die with it; nor
 move,
 Though earthquakes may shatter the shrine.
 Whence or how
 Love laid claim to this young life, it matters
 not now.

x.

Oh, is it a phantom? a dream of the night?
 A vision which fever hath fashion'd to sight?
 The wind wailing ever, with motion uncer-
 tain,

Sways sighingly there the drench'd tent's tat-
 tered curtain,

To and fro, up and down.

But it is not the wind
 That is lifting it now: and it is not the mind
 That hath moulded that vision.

A pale woman enters,
 As wan as the lamp's waning light, which con-
 centrates

Its dull glare upon her. With eyes dim and
 dimmer,

There, all in a slumberous and shadowy glim-
 mer,

The sufferer sees that still form floating on,
 And feels faintly aware that he is not alone.

She is flitting before him. She pauses. She
 stands

By his bedside all silent. She lays her white
 hands

On the brow of the boy. A light finger is
 pressing

Softly, softly, the sore wounds; the hot blood-
 stain'd dressing

Slips from them. A comforting quietude steals
 Through the rack'd weary frame; and, through-
 out it, he feels

The slow sense of a merciful, mild neighbor-
 hood.

Something smooths the toss'd pillow. Beneath
 a gray hood
 Of rough serge, two intense tender eyes are
 bent o'er him,
 And thrill through and through him. The
 sweet form before him,
 It is surely Death's angel Life's last vigil
 keeping:
 A soft voice says . . . "Sleep!"
 And he sleeps: he is sleeping.

XI.

He waked before dawn. Still the vision is
 there:
 Still that pale woman moves not. A minis-
 t'ring care
 Meanwhile has been silently changing and
 cheering
 The aspect of all things around him.
 Revering,
 Some power unknown and benignant, he bless'd
 In silence the sense of salvation. And rest
 Having loosen'd the mind's tangled meshes, he
 faintly
 Sigh'd . . . "Say what thou art, blessed dream
 of a saintly
 And minist'ring spirit!"
 A whisper serene
 Slid, softer than silence . . . "The Sœur Ser-
 aphine,
 A poor Sister of Charity. Shun to inquire
 Aught further, young soldier. The son of thy
 sire,

For the sake of that sire, I reclaim from the
grave.

Thou didst not shun death: shun not life: 'Tis
more brave

To live than to die. Sleep!"

He sleeps: he is sleeping.

XII.

He waken'd again, when the dawn was just
steeping

The skies with chill splendor. And there,
never flitting,

Never flitting, that mercy was sitting.

As the dawn to the darkness, so life seemed
returning

Slowly, feebly within him. The night-lamp
yet burning,

Made ghastly the glimmering daybreak.

He said,

"If thou be of the living, and not of the dead,
Sweet minister, pour out yet further the heal-
ing

Of that balmy voice; if it may be, revealing
Thy mission of mercy; whence art thou?"

"O son

Of Matilda and Alfred, it matters not! One
Who is not of the living nor yet of the dead:
To thee, and to others, alive yet" . . . she
said . . .

"So long as there liveth the poor gift in me
Of this ministration; to them, and to thee,
Dead in all things beside. A French Nun,
whose vocation

Is now by this bedside. A nun hath no nation.

Wherever man suffers, or woman may soothe,
There her land! there her kindred!"

She bent down to smooth
The hot pillow; and added . . . "Yet more
than another.

Is thy life dear to me. For thy father, thy
mother,

I know them—I know them."

"Oh, can it be? you!

My dearest dear father! my mother! you knew,
You know them?"

She bowed, half-averting her head
In silence.

He brokenly, timidly said,

"Do they know I am thus?"

"Hush!" . . . she smiled, as she drew
From her bosom two letters: and—can it be
true?

That beloved and familiar writing!

He burst

Into tears . . . "My poor mother—my father!
the worst

Will have reach'd them!"

"No, no!" she exclaimed, with a smile,
"They know you are living; they know that
meanwhile

I am watching beside you. Young soldier,
weep not!"

But still on the nun's nursing bosom, the hot
Fever'd brow of the boy weeping wildly is
press'd.

There, at last, the young heart sobs itself into
rest:

And he hears, as it were between smiling and weeping.
 The calm voice say . . . "Sleep!"
 And he sleeps, he is sleeping.

XIII.

And day follow'd day. And, as wave followed wave,
 With the tide, day by day, life, reissuing, drave
 Through that young hardy frame novel currents of health.
 Yet some strange obstruction, which life's health by stealth
 Seemed to cherish, impeded life's progress.
 And still
 A feebleness, less of the frame than the will,
 Clung about the sick man: hid and harbor'd within
 The sad hollow eyes: pinch'd the cheek pale and thin:
 And clothed the wan fingers with languor.
 And there,
 Day by day, night by night, unremitting in care,
 Unwearied in watching, so cheerful of mien.
 And so gentle of hand sat the Sœur Seraphine!

XIV.

A strange woman truly! not young; yet her face
 Wan and worn as it was, bore about it the trace
 Of a beauty which time could not ruin. For
 the whole

“What?
Lies my heart, then, so bare?” he moaned bit-
terly.

“Nay,”
With compassionate accents she hastened to
say,

“Do you think that these eyes are with sorrow,
young man,
So all unfamiliar, indeed, as to scan Her fea-
tures yet know them not?”

“Oh, was it spoken,
‘Go ye forth, heal the sick, lift the low, bind
the broken!’

Of the body alone? is our mission, then, done,
When we leave the bruised hearts, if we bind
the bruised bone?

Nay, is not the mission of mercy twofold?

Whence twofold, perchance, are the power,
that we hold

To fulfill it, of Heaven! For Heaven doth still
To us Sisters, it may be, who seek it, send
skill

Won from long intercourse with affliction, and
art

Help’d of Heaven, to bind up the broken of
heart.

Trust to me!” (His two feeble hands in her
own

She drew gently.) “Trust to me!” (she said,
with soft tone):

“I am not so dead in remembrance to all
I have died to in this world, but what I re-
call

Enough of its sorrow, enough of its trial,

To grieve for both—save from both haply!
The dial
Receives many shades, and each points to the
sun,
The shadows are many, the sunlight is one.
Life's sorrows still fluctuate: God's love does
not.
And His love is unchanged, when it changes
our lot.
Looking up to this light, which is common to
all,
And down to these shadows, on each side, that
fall
In time's silent circle, so various for each,
Is it nothing to know that they never can
reach
So far, but what light lies beyond them for-
ever?
Trust to me! Oh, if this hour I endeavor
To trace the shade creeping across the young
life
Which, in prayer till' this hour, I have watch'd
through its strife
With the shadow of death, 'tis with this faith
alone,
That, in tracing the shade, I shall find out the
sun.
Trust to me!"

She paused: he was weeping. Small need
Of added appeal, or entreaty, indeed,
Had those gentle accents to win from his pale
And parch'd, trembling lips, as it rose, the
brief tale
Of a life's early sorrow. The story is old,

And in words few as may be shall straightway
be told.

XVI.

A few years ago, ere the fair form of Peace
Was driven from Europe, a young girl—the
niece

Of a French noble, leaving an old Norman pile
By the wild northern seas, came to dwell for
awhile

With a lady allied to her race—an old dame
Of a threefold legitimate virtue, and name,
In the Faubourg Saint Germain.

Upon that fair child,
From childhood, nor father nor mother had
smiled.

One uncle their place in her life had supplied,
And their place in her heart: she had grown at
his side,

And under his roof-tree, and in his regard,
From childhood to girlhood.

This fair orphan ward
Seem'd the sole human creature that lived in
the heart

Of that stern rigid man, or whose smile could
impart

One ray of response to the eyes which, above
Her fair infant forehead, look'd down with a
love

That seem'd almost stern, so intense was its
chill

Lofty stillness, like sunlight on some lonely
hill

Which is colder and stiller than sunlight else-
where.

Grass grew in the court-yard; the chambers
were bare
In that ancient mansion; when first the stern
tread
Of its owner awaken'd their echoes long dead:
Bringing with him this infant (the child of a
brother),
Whom, dying, the hands of a desolate mother
Had placed on his bosom. 'Twas said—right
or wrong—
That, in the lone mansion, left tenantless long
To which, as a stranger, its lord now return'd,
In years yet recall'd, through loud midnights
had burn'd
The light of wild orgies. Be that false or
true,
Slow and sad was the footstep which now wan-
der'd rough
Those desolate chambers; and calm and severe
Was the life of their inmate.
Men now saw appear
Every morn at the mass that firm sorrowful
face
Which seem'd to lock up in a cold iron case
Tears harden'd to crystal. Yet harsh if he
were
His severity seem'd to be trebly severe
In the rule of his own rigid life, which, at least,
Was benignant to others. The poor parish
priest,
Who lived on his largess, his piety praised.
The peasant was fed, and the chapel was
raised,
And the cottage was built, by his liberal hand.

Yet he seem'd in the midst of his good deeds
to stand

A lone, and unloved, and unlovable man.

There appear'd some inscrutable flow in the
plan

Of his life, that love fail'd to pass over.

That child

Alone did not fear him, nor shrink from him;
smiled

To his frown, and dispell'd it.

The sweet sportive elf

Seem'd the type of some joy lost, and miss'd,
in himself.

Ever welcome he suffer'd her glad face to glide
In no hours when to others his door was de-
nied:

And many a time with a mute moody look
He would watch her at prattle and play, like a
brook

Whose babble disturbs not the quietest spot,
But soothes us because we need answer it
not.

But few years had pass'd o'er that childhood
before

A change came among them. A letter, which
bore

Sudden consequence with it, one morning was
placed

In the hands of the lord of the chateau. He
paced

To and fro in his chamber a whole night alone
After reading that letter. At dawn he was
gone.

Weeks pass'd. When he came back again he
 return'd
 With a tall ancient dame, from whose lips the
 child learn'd
 That they were of the same race and name.
 With a face
 Sad and anxious, to this wither'd stock of the
 race
 He confided the orphan, and left them alone
 In the old lonely house.

In a few days 'twas known,
 To the angry surprise of half Paris, that one
 Of the chiefs of that party which, still clinging
 on
 To the banner that bears the white lilies of
 France,
 Will fight 'neath no other, nor yet for the
 chance
 Of restoring their own, had renounced the
 watch-word
 And the creed of his youth in unsheathing his
 sword,
 For a Fatherland father'd no more (such is
 fate!)
 By legitimate parents.

And meanwhile elate
 And in nowise disturbed by what Paris might
 say,
 The new soldier thus wrote to a friend far
 away:—
 "To the life of inaction farewell! After all,
 Creeds the oldest may crumble, and dynasties
 fall,
 But the sole grand Legitimacy will endure,

In whatever makes death noble, life strong and
pure.

Freedom! action! . . . the desert to breathe in
—the lance

Of the Arab to follow! I go, Vive la France!"

Few and rare were the meetings henceforth, as
years fled,

'Twixt the child and the soldier. The two
women led

Lone lives in the lone house. Meanwhile the
child grew

Into girlhood; and, like a sunbeam, sliding
through

Her green quiet years, changed by gentle de-
grees

To the loveliest vision of youth a youth sees

In his loveliest fancies: as pure as a pearl,

And as perfect: a noble and innocent girl,

With eighteen summers dissolved in the light

Of her lovely and lovable eyes, soft and bright!

Then her guardian wrote to the dame, . . .

“Let Constance

Go with you to Paris. I trust that in France

I may be ere the close of the year. I confide

My life's treasure to you. Let her see, at your

side,

The world which we live in.”

To Paris then came

Constance to abide with that old stately dame

In that old stately Faubourg.

The young Englishman

Thus met her. 'Twas there their acquaintance

began,

There it closed. That old miracle—Love-at-
first-sight
Needs no explanations. The heart reads aright
Its destiny sometimes. His love neither chid-
den
Nor check'd, the young soldier was graciously
bidden
An habitual guest to that house by the dame.
His own candid graces, the world-honor'd
name
Of his father (in him not dishonor'd) were both
Fair titles to favor. His love, nothing loath,
The old lady observed, was return'd by Con-
stance.
And as the child's uncle his absence from
France
Yet prolong'd, she (thus easing long self-grat-
ulation)
Wrote to him a lengthen'd and moving narra-
tion
Of the graces and gifts of the young English
wooer:
His father's fair fame; the boy's deference to
her;
His love for Constance,—unaffected, sincere;
And the girl's love for him, read by her in
those clear
Limpid eyes; then the pleasure with which she
awaited
Her cousin's approval of all she had stated.
At length from that cousin an answer there
came,
Brief, stern; such as stunn'd and astonish'd
the dame.

The woman he loved, for himself dare he seek
 Surcease to that sorrow, which thus held him
 weak,
 Beat him down, and destroy'd him?
 News reach'd him, indeed,
 Through a comrade, who brought him a letter
 to read
 From the dame who had care of Constance (it
 was one
 To whom, when at Paris, the boy had been
 known,
 A Frenchman, and friend of the Faubourg),
 which said
 That Constance, although never a murmur be-
 tray'd
 What she suffer'd, in silence grew paler each
 day,
 And seem'd visibly drooping and dying away.
 It was then he sought death.

XVII.

 Thus the tale ends. 'Twas told
 With such broken, passionate words, as unfold,
 In glimpses alone, a coil'd grief. Through
 each pause
 Of its fitful recital, in raw gusty flaws,
 The rain shook the canvas, unheeded; aloof,
 And unheeded, the night-wind around the tent-
 roof
 At intervals wirbled. And when all was said,
 The sick man, exhausted, droop'd backward
 his head,
 And fell into a feverish slumber.

 Long while

Sat the Sœur Seraphine, in deep thought. The
 still smile
 That was wont, angel-wise, to inhabit her face
 And make it like heaven, was fled from its
 place
 In her eyes, on her lips; and a deep sadness
 there
 Seem'd to darken the lines of long sorrow and
 care,
 As low to herself she sigh'd . . .
 "Hath it, Eugene,
 Been so long, then, the struggle? . . . and yet,
 all in vain!
 Nay, not all in vain! Shall the world gain a
 man,
 And yet heaven lose a soul? Have I done all
 I can?
 Soul to soul, did he say? Soul to soul, be it so!
 And then—soul of mine, whither? whither?"

XVIII.

Large, slow,
 Silent tears in those deep eyes ascended, and
 fell.
 "Here, at least, I have fail'd not" . . . she
 mused . . . "this is well!"
 She drew from her bosom two letters.
 In one,
 A mother's heart, wild with alarm for her son,
 Breathed bitterly forth its despairing appeal.
 "The pledge of a love owed to thee, O Lucile!
 The hope of a home saved by thee—of a heart
 Which hath never since then (thrice endear'd
 as thou art!)"

Ceased to bless thee, to pray for thee, save!
 . . . save my son!

And if not" . . . the letter went brokenly on,
 "Heaven help us!"

Then follow'd, from Alfred, a few
 Blotted heart-broken pages. He mournfully
 drew

With pathos the picture of that earnest youth,
 So unlike his own; how in beauty and truth
 He had nurtured that nature, so simple and
 brave!

And how he had striven his son's youth to save
 From the errors so sadly redeem'd in his own,
 And so deeply repented: how thus, in that son,
 In whose youth he had garner'd his age, he
 had seem'd

To be bless'd by a pledge that the past was re-
 deem'd

And forgiven. He bitterly went on to speak
 Of the boy's baffled love; in which fate seem'd
 to break

Unawares on his dreams with retributive pain,
 And the ghosts of the past rose to scourge back
 again

The hopes of the future. To sue for consent
 Pride forbade: and the hope his old foe might
 relent

Experience rejected . . . "My life for the boy's!"
 (He exclaim'd); "for I die with my son, if he
 dies!

Lucile! Heaven bless you for all you have
 done!

Save him, save him, Lucile! save my son! save
 my son!"

XIX.

"Ay!" murmur'd the Sœur Seraphine . . .
 "heart to heart!
 There, at least, I have fail'd not! Fulfill'd is
 my part?
 Accomplish'd my mission? One act crowns
 the whole.
 Do I linger? Nay, be it so, then! . . . Soul to
 soul!"
 She knelt down and pray'd. Still the boy
 slumber'd on,
 Dawn broke. The pale nun from the bedside
 was gone.

XX.

Meanwhile, 'mid his aides-de-camp, busily bent
 O'er the daily reports, in his well-order'd tent
 There sits a French General—bronzed by the
 sun
 And sear'd by the sands of Algeria. One
 Who forth from the wars of the wild Kabylee
 Had strangely and rapidly risen to be
 The idol, the darling, the dream and the
 star
 Of the younger French chivalry; daring in
 war,
 And wary in council. He enter'd, indeed,
 Late in life (and discarding his Bourbonite
 creed)
 The Army of France: and had risen, in part
 From a singular aptitude proved for the art
 Of that wild desert warfare of ambush, sur-
 prise,

And stratagem, which to the French camp sup-
 plies
 Its subtlest intelligence; partly from chance;
 Partly, too, from a name and position which
 France
 Was proud to put forward; but mainly, in
 fact,
 From the prudence to plan, and the daring to
 act,
 In frequent emergencies startlingly shown
 To the rank which he now held,—intrepidly
 won
 With many a wound, trench'd in many a scar,
 From fierce Milianah and Sidi-Sakhdar.

XXI.

All within, and without, that warm tent seems
 to bear
 Smiling token of provident order and care.
 All about, a well-fed, well-clad soldiery stands
 In groups round the music of mirth-breathing
 bands.
 In and out of the tent, all day long, to and fro,
 The messengers come and the messengers go,
 Upon missions of mercy, or errands of toil:
 To report how the sapper contends with the
 soil
 In the terrible trench, how the sick man is
 faring
 In the hospital tent: and, combining, compar-
 ing,
 Constructing, within moves the brain of one
 man,
 Moving all.

He is bending his brow o'er some plan
For the hospital service, wise, skillful, hu-
mane.

The officer standing behind him is fain
To refer to the angel solicitous cares
Of the Sisters of Charity: one he declares
To be known through the camp as a seraph of
grace;

He has seen, all have seen her indeed, in each
place

Where suffering is seen, silent, active—the
Sœur . . .

Sœur . . . how do they call her?

“Ay, truly, of her
I have heard much,” the General, musing, re-
plies;

“And we owe her already (unless rumor lies)
The lives of not few of our bravest. You
mean . . .

Ay, how do they call her? . . . the—Sœur—
Seraphine

(Is it not so?). I rarely forget names once
heard.

“Yes; the Sœur Seraphine. Her I meant.”

“On my word,
I have much wish'd to see her. I fancy I trace,
In some facts traced to her, something more
than the grace

Of an angel; I mean an acute human mind,
Ingenious, constructive, intelligent. Find,
And, if possible, let her come to me. We shall,
I think, aid each other.”

“*Oui, mon General:*
I believe she has lately obtained the permission

To tend some sick man in the Second Division
Of our Ally: they say a relation."

"Ay, so?

A relation?"

" 'Tis said so."

"The name do you know?"

"*Non, mon General.*"

While they spoke yet, there went
A murmur and stir round the door of the tent.
"A Sister of Charity craves, in a case
Of urgent and serious importance, the grace
Of brief private speech with the General
there.

Will the General speak with her?"

"Bid her declare

Her mission."

"She will not. She craves to be seen
And be heard."

"Well, her name, then?"

"The Sœur Seraphine."

"Clear the tent. She may enter."

XXII.

The tent has been clear'd,
The chieftain stroked moodily somewhat his
beard,
A sable long silver'd: and press'd down his
brow
On his hand, heavy vein'd. All his counte-
nance, now
Unwitness'd, at once fell dejected, and dreary,
As a curtain let fall by a hand that's grown
weary,

Into puckers and folds. From his lips, unre-
 press'd,
 Steals th' impatient quick sigh which reveals
 in man's breast
 A conflict conceal'd, an experience at strife
 With itself,—the vex'd heart's passing protest
 on life.
 He turn'd to his papers. He heard the light
 tread
 Of a faint foot behind him: and, lifting his
 head,
 Said, "Sit, Holy Sister! your worth is well
 known
 To the hearts of our soldiers; nor less to my
 own.
 I have much wish'd to see you. I owe you
 some thanks:
 In the name of all those you have saved to our
 ranks
 I record them. Sit! Now, then, your mis-
 sion?"

The nun

Paused silent. The General eyed her anon
 More keenly. His aspect grew troubled. A
 change
 Darken'd over his features. He mutter'd . . .
 "Strange! strange!
 Any face should so strongly remind me of her!
 Fool! again the delirium, the dream! does it
 stir?
 Does it move as of old? Psha!
 "Sit, Sister! I wait
 Your answer, my time halts but hurriedly.
 State

The cause why you seek me?"

"The cause? ay, the cause!"

She vaguely repeated. Then, after a pause,—
As one who, awaked unawares, would put back
The sleep that forever returns in the track
Of dreams which, though scared and dispersed,
not the less

Settle back to faint eyelids that yield 'neath
their stress,

Like doves to a penthouse,—a movement she
made,

Less toward him than away from herself;
droop'd her head

And folded her hands on her bosom; long,
spare,

Fatigued, mournful hands! Not a stream of
stray hair

Escaped her pale bands; scarce more pale than
the face

Which they bound and lock'd up in a rigid
white case.

She fix'd her eyes on him. There crept a
vague awe

O'er his sense, such as ghosts cast

"Eugene de Luvois,

The cause which recalls me again to your
side,

Is a promise that rests unfulfill'd," she replied.

"I come to fulfill it."

He sprang from the place

Where he sat, pressed his hand, as in doubt,
o'er his face;

And, cautiously feeling each step o'er the
ground

And sad was the gaze which the Sœur Sera-
phine
Held on him. She spoke.

XXIII.

As some minstrel may fling,
Preluding the music yet music in each string,
A swift hand athwart the blush'd heart of the
whole,
Seeking which note most fitly must first move
the soul;
And, leaving untroubled the deep chords
below,
Move pathetic in numbers remote;—even so
The voice which was moving the heart of that
man
Far away from its yet voiceless purpose began,
Far away in the pathos remote of the past;
Until, through her words, rose before him, at
last,
Bright and dark in their beauty, the hopes that
were gone
Unaccomplish'd from life.

He was mute.

XXIV.

She went on..
And still further down the dim past did she
lead
Each yielding remembrance, far, far off, to
feed
'Mid the pastures of youth, in the twilight of
hope,
And the valleys of boyhood, the fresh-flower'd
slope

Of life's dawning land!

'Tis the heart of a boy,
With its indistinct, passionate prescience of
joy!

The unproved desire—the unaim'd aspiration—
The deep conscious life that forestalls consum-
mation;

With ever a fitting delight—one arm's length
In advance of the august inward impulse

The strength
Of the spirit which troubles the seed in the
sand

With the birth of the palm-tree! Let ages
expand

The glorious creature! The ages lie shut
(Safe, see!) in the seed, at time's signal to put
Forth their beauty and power, leaf by leaf,
layer on layer,

Till the palm strikes the sun, and stands broad
in blue air.

So the palm in the palm-seed! so, slowly—so
wrought

Year by year unperceived, hope on hope,
thought by thought,

Trace the growth of the man from its germ in
the boy.

Ah, but Nature, that nurtures, may also
destroy!

Charm the wind and the sun, lest some chance
intervene!

While the leaf's in the bud, while the stem's
in the green,

A light bird bends the branch, a light breeze
breaks the bough,

Which, if spared by the light breeze, the light
bird, may grow
To baffle the tempest, and rock the high nest,
And take both the bird and the breeze to its
breast.

Shall we save a whole forest in sparing one
seed?

Save the man in the boy? in the thought save
the deed?

Let the whirlwind uproot the grown tree, if it
can!

Save the seed from the north wind. So let
the grown man

Face our fate. Spare the man-seed in youth.
He was dumb.

She went one step further.

xxv.

Lo! manhood is come.

And love, the wild song-bird, hath flown to the
tree,

And the whirlwind comes after. Now prove
we, and see:

What shade from the leaf? what support from
the branch?

Spreads the leaf broad and fair? holds the
bough strong and stanch?

There, he saw himself—dark, as he stood on
that night,

The last when they met and they parted: a
sight

For heaven to mourn o'er, for hell to rejoice!
An ineffable tenderness troubled her voice:

It grew weak, and a sigh broke it through.

Then he said
 (Never looking at her, never lifting his head,
 As though, at his feet, there lay visibly hurl'd
 Those fragments), "It was not a love, 'twas a
 world,
 'Twas a life that lay ruin'd, Lucile!"

XXVI.

She went on:
 "So be it! Perish Babel, arise Babylon!
 From ruins like these rise the fanes that shall
 last,
 And to build up the future heaven shatters the
 past."
 "Ay," he moodily murmur'd, "and who cares
 to scan
 The heart's perish'd world gains a man?
 From the past to the present, though late, I
 appeal;
 To the nun Seraphine, from the woman
 Lucile!"

XXVII.

Lucile! . . . the old name—the old self!
 silenced long:
 Heard once more! felt once more!
 As some soul to the throng
 Of invisible spirits admitted, baptized
 By death to a new name and nature—surprised
 'Mid the songs of the seraphs, hears faintly,
 and far,
 Some voice from the earth, left below a dim
 star,
 Calling to her forlornly; and sadd'ning the
 psalms

Of the angels, and piercing the Paradise
palms!)

The name borne 'mid earthly beloveds on
earth

Sigh'd above some lone grave in the land of
her birth;—

So that one word . . . Lucile! . . . stirr'd
the Sœur Seraphine,

For a moment. Anon she resumed her serene
And concentrated calm.

“Let the Nun, then, retrace
The life of the soldier!” . . . she said, with a
face

That glow'd, gladdening her words.

“To the present I come:
Leave the Past!”

There her voice rose, and seem'd as
when some

Pale Priestess proclaims from her temple the
praise

Of her hero whose brows she is crowning with
bays.

Step by step did she follow his path from the
place

Where their two paths diverged. Year by year
did she trace

(Familiar with all) his, the soldier's existence.
Her words were of trial, endurance, resistance;
Of the leaguer around this besieged world of
ours:

And the same sentinels that ascend the same
towers

And report the same foes, the same fears, the
same strife,

Waged alike to the limits of each human life.
 She went on to speak of the lone moody lord,
 Shut up in his lone moody halls: every word
 Held the weight of a tear: she recorded the
 good
 He had patiently wrought through a whole
 neighborhood;
 And the blessing that lived on the lips of the
 poor,
 By the peasant's hearthstone, or the cottager's
 door.
 There she paused: and her accents seem'd
 dipp'd in the hue
 Of his own somber heart, as the picture she
 drew
 Of the poor, proud, sad spirit, rejecting love's
 wages,
 Yet working love's work; reading backwards
 life's pages
 For penance; and stubbornly, many a time,
 Both missing the moral, and marring the
 rhyme.
 Then she spoke of the soldier! . . . the man's
 work and fame,
 The pride of a nation, a world's just acclaim,
 Life's inward approval!

xxviii.

 Her voice reach'd his heart,
 And sank lower. She spoke of herself: how,
 apart
 And unseen,—far away,—she had watch'd,
 year by year,
 With how many a blessing, how many a tear,

And how many a prayer, every stage in the
strife:

Guess'd the thought in the deed: traced the
love in the life:

Bless'd the man in the man's work!

“Thy work . . . oh, not mine!
Thine, Lucile!” . . . he exclaim'd . . . “all
the worth of it thine

If worth there be in it!”

Her answer convey'd
His reward, and her own: joy that cannot be
said

Alone by the voice . . . eyes—face—spoke
silently:

All the woman, one grateful emotion!

And she
A poor Sister of Charity! hers a life spent
In one silent effort for others! . . .

She bent
Her divine face above him, and fill'd up his
heart

With the look that glow'd from it.

Then slow, with soft art,
Fix'd her aim, and moved to it.

XXIX.

He, the soldier humane,
He, the hero; whose heart hid in glory the
pain

Of a youth disappointed; whose life had made
known

The value of man's life! . . . that youth over-
thrown

And retrieved, had it left him no pity for youth

In another? his own life of strenuous truth
 Accomplish'd in act, had it taught him no care
 For the life of another? . . . oh no! every-
 where

In the camp which she moved through, she
 came face to face

With some noble token, some generous trace
 Of his active humanity . . .

“Well,” he replied,
 “If it be so?”

“I come from the solemn bedside
 Of a man that is dying,” she said. “While we
 speak,
 A life is in jeopardy.”

“Quick then! you seek
 Aid or medicine, or what?”

“ ’Tis not needed,” she said
 “Medicine? yes, for the mind! ’Tis a heart that
 needs aid!

You, Eugene de Luvois, you (and you only)
 can

Save the life of this man. Will you save it?”

“What man?
 How? . . . where? . . . can you ask?”

She went rapidly on
 To her object in brief vivid words . . . The
 young son

Of Matilda and Alfred—the boy lying there
 Half a mile from that tent door—the father’s
 despair,

The mother’s deep anguish—the pride of the
 boy

In the father—the father’s one hope and one
 joy

In the son:—the son now—wounded, dying!
She told
Of the father's stern struggle with life: the
boy's bold,
Pure, and beautiful nature: the fair life before
him
If that life were but spared . . . yet a word
might restore him!
The boy's broken love for the niece of Eugene!
Its pathos: the girl's love for him; how, half
slain
In his tent she had found him: won from him
the tale;
Sought to nurse back his life; found her efforts
still fail;
Beaten back by a love that was stronger than
life;
Of how bravely till then he had stood in that
strife
Wherein England and France in their best
blood, at last,
Had bathed from remembrance the wounds of
the past.
And shall nations be nobler than men? Are
not great
Men the models of nations? For what is a state
But the many's confused imitation of one?
Shall he, the fair hero of France, on the son
Of his ally seek vengeance, destroying per-
chance
An innocent life,—here, when England and
France
Have forgiven the sins of their fathers of
yore,

And baptized a new hope in their sons' recent
gore?

She went on to tell how the boy had clung still
To life, for the sake of life's uses, until
From his weak hands the strong effort dropp'd,
stricken down

By the news that the heart of Constance, lies
his own,

Was breaking beneath . . .

But there "Hold!" he exclaim'd,
Interrupting, "forbear!" . . . his whole face
was inflamed

With the heart's swarthy thunder which yet,
while she spoke,

Had been gathering silent—at last the storm
broke

In grief or in wrath . . .

"'Tis to him, then," he cried, . . .
Checking suddenly short the tumultuous
stride,

"That I owe these late greetings—for him you
are here—

For his sake you seek me—for him, it is clear,
You have deign'd at the last to bethink you
again

Of this long forgotten existence!"

"Eugene!"

"Ha! fool that I was!" . . . he went on, . . .

"and just now,

While you spoke yet, my heart was beginning
to grow

Almost boyish again, almost sure of one friend!
Yet this was the meaning of all—this the end!
Be it so! There's a sort of slow justice (admit!).

In this—that the word that man's finger hath
writ

In fire on my heart, I return him at last.

Let him learn that word—Never!"

"Ah, still to the past
Must the present be vassal?" she said. "In
the hour

We last parted I urged you to put forth the
power

Which I felt to be yours, in the conquest of life.

Yours, the promise to strive: mine,—to watch
o'er the strife.

I foresaw you would conquer; you have con-
quer'd much,

Much, indeed, that is noble! I hail it as such,

And am here to record and applaud it. I saw

Not the less in your nature, Eugene de Luvois,

One peril—one point where I feared you would
fail

To subdue that worst foe which a man can as-
sail,—

Himself: and I promised that, if I should see

My champion once falter, or bend the brave
knee,

That moment would bring me again to his side.

That moment is come! for that peril was pride,

And you falter. I plead for yourself, and one
another,

For that gentle child without father or mother.

To whom you are both. I plead, soldier of
France,

For your own nobler nature—and plead for
Constance!"

At the sound of that name he averted his head.

“Constance! . . . Ay, she enter’d my lone
life” (he said,)

“When its sun was long set; and hung over its
night

Her own starry childhood. I have but that
light,

In the midst of much darkness! Who names
me but she

With titles of love? and what rests there for me
In the silence of age save the voice of that
child?

The child of my own better life, undefiled!

My creature, carved out of my heart of hearts!”

“Say,”

Said the Sœur Seraphine—“are you able to lay
Your hand as a knight on your heart as a man
And swear that, whatever may happen, you can
Feel assured for the life you thus cherish?”

“How so?”

He looked up. “If the boy should die thus?”

“Yes, I know

What your look would imply . . . this sleek
stranger forsooth!

Because on his cheek was the red rose of youth
The heart of my niece must break for it!”

She cried.

“Nay, but hear me yet further!”

With slow heavy stride,

Unheeding her words, he was pacing the tent.

He was muttering low to himself as he went.

“Ay, these young things lie safe in our heart
just so long

As their wings are in growing; and when these
are strong

They break it, and farewell! the bird flies!" . . .
The nun
 Laid her hand on the soldier, and murmur'd,
 "The sun
 Is descending, life fleets while we talk thus!
 on, yet
 Let this day upon one final victory set,
 And complete a life's conquest!"

He said, "Understand!

If Constance wed the son of this man, by whose
 hand
 My heart hath been robb'd, she is lost to my
 life!
 Can her home be my home? Can I claim in the
 wife
 Of that man's son the child of my age? At her
 side
 Shall he stand on my hearth? Shall I sue to
 the bride
 Of . . . enough!

"Ah, and you immemorial halls

Of my Norman forefathers, whose shadow yet
 falls
 On my fancy, and fuses hope, memory, past,
 Present,—all, in one silence! old trees to the
 blast
 Of the North sea repeating the tale of old days,
 Nevermore, nevermore in the wild bosky ways
 Shall I hear through your umbrage ancestral
 the wind
 Prophecy as of yore, when it shook the deep
 mind
 Of my boyhood, with whispers from out the far
 years

Of love, fame, the raptures life cools down with
tears!

Henceforth shall the tread of a Vargrave alone
Rouse your echoes?"

“O think not,” she said, “of the son
Of the man whom unjustly you hate; only
think

Of this young human creature, that cries from
the brink

Of a grave to your mercy!

“Recall your own words
(Words my memory mournfully ever records!)
How with love may be wreck'd a whole life!
then, Eugene,

Look with me (stil' those words in our ears!)
once again

At this young soldier sinking from life here—
dragg'd down

By the weight of the love in his heart: no re-
nown,

No fame comforts him! nations shout not
above

The lone grave down to which he is bearing the
love

Which life has rejected! Will you stand apart?
You, with such a love's memory deep in your
heart,

You the hero, whose life hath perchance been
led on

Through the deeds it hath wrought to the fame
it hath won,

By recalling the visions and dreams of a youth,
Such as lies at your door now: who have but,
in truth.

To stretch forth a hand, to speak only one
word

And by that work you rescue a life!"

He was stirr'd.

Still he sought to put from him the cup; bow'd
his face

On his hand; and anon, as though wishing to
chase

With one angry gesture his own thoughts aside,
He sprang up, brush'd past her, and bitterly
cried,

"No!—Constance wed a Vargrave!—I cannot
consent!"

Then up rose the Sœur Seraphine.

The low tent,

In her sudden uprising, seem'd dwarf'd by the
height

From which those imperial eyes pour'd the
light

Of their deep silent sadness upon him.

No wonder

He felt, as it were, his own stature shrink un-
der

The compulsion of that grave regard! For
between

The Duc de Luvois and the Sœur Seraphine
At that moment there rose all the height of one
soul

O'er another; she look'd down on him from
the whole

Lonely length of a life. There were sad nights
and days,

There were long months and years in that
heart-searching gaze;

And her voice, when she spoke, with sharp
 pathos thrill'd through
 And transfix'd him.

“Eugene de Luvois, but for you,
 I might have been now—not this wandering
 nun,

But a mother, a wife—pleading, not for the son
 Of another, but blessing some child of my own,
 His,—the man's that I once loved! . . . Hush!
 that which is done

I regret not. I breathe no reproaches. That's
 best

Which God sends. 'Twas His will: it is mine.

And the rest

Of that riddle I will not look back to. He
 reads

In your heart—He that judges of all thoughts
 and deeds.

With eyes, mine forestall not! This only I say:
 You have not the right (read it, you, as you
 may!)

To say . . . ‘I am the wrong'd.’ ”

“Have I wrong'd thee?—wrong'd thee!”
 He falter'd, “Lucile, ah, Lucile!”

“Nay, not me,”

She murmur'd, “but man! The lone nun
 standing here

Has no claim upon earth, and is pass'd from
 the sphere

Of earth's wrongs and earth's reparations. But
 she,

The dead woman, Lucile, she whose grave is in
 me,

Demands from her grave reparation to man.,

Reparation to God. Heed, O heed, while you
 can
 This voice from the grave!"
 "Hush!" he moan'd, "I obey
 The Sœur Seraphine. There, Lucile! let this
 pay
 Every debt that is due to that grave. Now lead
 on:
 I follow you Sœur Seraphine! . . . To the
 son
 Of Lord Alfred Vargrave . . . And then," . . .
 As he spoke
 He lifted the tent-door, and down the dun
 smoke
 Pointed out the dark bastions, with batteries
 crown'd,
 Of the city beneath them
 "Then, there, underground,
 And *valete et plaudite*, soon as may be!
 Let the old tree go down to the earth—the old
 tree,
 With the worm at its heart! Lay the ax to
 the root!
 Who will miss the old stump, so we save the
 young shoot?
 A Vargrave! . . . this pays all . . . Lead
 on! . . . In the seed
 Save the forest! . . .
 I follow . . . forth, forth! where you lead.

xxx.

The day was declining; a day sick and damp.
 In a bland ghostly glare shone the bleak
 ghostly camp

Of the English. Alone in his dim, spectral
 tent
 (Himself the wan specter of youth), with eyes
 bent
 On the daylight departing, the sick man was
 sitting
 Upon his low pallet. These thoughts, vaguely
 flitting,
 Cross'd the silence between him and death,
 which seem'd near,
 —“Pain o'erreaches itself, so is balk'd! else
 how bear
 This intense and intolerable solitude,
 With its eye on my heart and its hand on my
 blood?
 Pulse by pulse! Day goes down: yet she
 comes not again.
 Other suffering, doubtless, where hope is more
 plain,
 Claims her elsewhere. I die, strange! and
 scarcely feel sad.
 Oh, to think of Constance thus, and not to go
 mad!
 But Death, it would seem, dulls the sense to
 his own
 Dull doings . . .”

xxxI.

Between those sick eyes and the sun
 A shadow fell thwart.

xxxII.

'Tis the pale nun once more!
 But who stands at her side, mute and dark in
 the door?

How oft had he watch'd through the glory and
gloom
Of the battle, with long, longing looks that
dim plume
Which now (one stray sunbeam upon it) shook,
stoop'd
To where the tent-curtain, dividing, was
loop'd!
How that stern face had haunted and hover'd
about
The dreams it still scared! through what fond
fear and doubt
Had the boy yearn'd in heart to the hero!
(What's like
A boy's love for some famous man?) . . . Oh,
to strike
A wild path through the battle, down striking
perchance
Some rash foeman too near the great soldier
of France,
And so fall in his glorious regard! . . . Oft,
how oft
His heart flash'd this hope out, whilst watch-
ing aloft
The dim battle that plume dance and dart—
never seen
So near till this moment! how eager to glean
Every word, dropp'd through the camp-babble
in praise
Of his hero—each tale of old venturous days
In the desert! And now . . . could he speak
out his heart
Face to face with that man ere he died!

xxxiii.

With a start

The sick soldier sprang up: the blood sprang
 up in him,
 To his throat, and o'erthrew him: he reel'd
 back: a dim
 Sanguine haze fill'd his eyes; in his ears rose
 the din
 And rush, as of cataracts loosen'd within,
 Through which he saw faintly, and heard, the
 pale nun
 (Looking larger than life, where she stood in
 the sun)
 Point to him and murmur, "Behold!" Then
 that plume
 Seem'd to wave like a fire, and fade off in the
 gloom
 Which momentarily put out the world.

xxxiv.

To his side

Moved the man the boy dreaded yet loved . . .
 "Ah!" . . . he sigh'd,
 "The smooth brow, the fair Vargrave face!
 and those eyes,
 All the mother's! The old things again!
 "Do not rise.
 You suffer, young man?"

THE BOY.

Sir, I die.

THE DUKE.

Not so young!

THE BOY.

So young? yes: and yet I have tangled among
The fray'd warp and woof of this brief life of
mine

Other lives than my own. Could my death
but untwine

The vext skein . . . but it will not. Yes,
Duke, young—so young!

And I knew you not? yet I have done you a
wrong

Irreparable! . . . late, too late to repair.

If I knew any means . . . but I know none!

. . . I swear,

If this broken fraction of time could extend

Into infinite lives of atonement, no end

Would seem too remote for my grief (could
that be!)

To include it! Not too late, however, for me

To entreat; is it too late for you to forgive?

THE DUKE.

You wrong—my forgiveness—explain.

THE BOY.

Could I live!

Such a very few hours left to life, yet I shrink,
I falter . . . Yes, Duke, your forgiveness I
think

Should free my soul hence.

Ah! you could not surmise

That a boy's beating heart, burning thoughts,
longing eyes

Were following you evermore (heeded not!)

While the battle was flowing between us: nor
 what

Eager, dubious footsteps at nightfall oft went
 With the wind and the rain, round and round
 your blind tent,

Persistent and wild as the wind and the rain,
 Unnoticed as these, weak as these, and as vain!
 Oh, how obdurate then look'd your tent! The
 waste air

Grew stern at the gleam which said . . . "Off!
 he is there!"

I know not what merciful mystery now
 Brings you here, whence the man whom you
 see lying low

Other footsteps (not those!) must soon bear to
 the grave.

But death is at hand, and the few words I
 have

Yet to speak, I must speak them at once.

Duke, I swear,

As I lie here, (Death's angel too close not to
 hear!)

That I meant not this wrong to you. Duc de
 Luvois,

I loved your niece—loved? why, I love her! I
 saw,

And, seeing, how could I but love her? I
 seem'd

Born to love her. Alas, were that all! Had I
 dream'd

Of this love's cruel consequence as it rests now
 Ever fearfully present before me, I vow

That the secret, unknown, had gone down to
 the tomb

Into which I descend . . . Oh, why, whilst
 there was room
 In life left for warning, had no one the heart
 To warn me? Had any one whisper'd . . .
 "Depart!"
 To the hope the whole world seem'd in league
 then to nurse!
 Had any one hinted . . . "Beware of the curse
 Which is coming!" There was not a voice
 raised to tell,
 Not a hand moved to warn from the blow ere
 it fell,
 And then . . . then the blow fell on both!
 This is why
 I implore you to pardon that great injury
 Wrought on her, and, through her, wrought on
 you, Heaven knows
 How unwittingly!

THE DUKE.

Ah! . . . and, young soldier, suppose
 That I came here to seek, not grant, pardon?—

THE BOY.

Of whom?

THE DUKE.

Of yourself.

THE BOY.

Duke, I bear in my heart to the tomb
 No boyish resentment; not one lonely thought
 That honors you not. In all this there is
 naught.

'Tis for me to forgive.

Every glorious act

Of your great life starts forward, an eloquent
 fact,
 To confirm in my boy's heart its faith in your
 own.
 And have I not hoarded, to ponder upon,
 A hundred great acts from your life? Nay,
 all these,
 Were they so many lying and false witnesses,
 Does there rest not one voice, which was never
 untrue?
 I believe in Constance, Duke, as she does in
 you!
 In this great world around us, wherever we
 turn,
 Some grief irremediable we discern;
 And yet—there sits God, calm in Heaven
 above!
 Do we trust one whit less in His justice or
 love?
 I judge not.

THE DUKE.

Enough! Hear at last, then, the truth,
 Your father and I—foes we were in our youth.
 It matters not why. Yet thus much under-
 stand:
 The hope of my youth was sign'd out by his
 hand.
 I was not of those whom the buffets of fate
 Tame and teach: and my heart buried slain
 love in hate.
 If your own frank young heart, yet uncon-
 scious of all
 Which turns the heart's blood in its springtide
 to gall,

And unable to guess even aught that the fur-
row
Across these gray brows hides of sin or of sor-
row,
Comprehend not the evil and grief of my life,
'Twill at least comprehend how intense was
the strife
Which is closed in this act of atonement, where-
by
I seek in the son of my youth's enemy
The friend of my age. Let the present release
Here acquitted the past! In the name of my
niece,
Whom for my life in yours as a hostage I give,
Are you great enough, boy, to forgive me,—
and live?
Whilst he spoke thus, a doubtful tumultuous
joy
Chased its fleeting effects o'er the face of the
boy:
As when some stormy moon, in a long cloud
confined,
Struggles outward through shadows, the vary-
ing wind
Alternates, and bursts, self-surprised, from her
prison,
So that joy grew clear in his face. He had
risen
To answer the Duke; but strength fail'd every
limb;
A strange, happy feebleness trembled through
him.
With a faint cry of rapturous wonder, he sank
On the breast of the nun, who stood near.

“Yes, boy! thank

This guardian angel,” the Duke said. “I—
 you,
 We owe all to her. Crown her work. Live!
 be true
 To your young life’s fair promise, and live for
 her sake!”

“Yes, Duke: I will live. I must live—live to
 make
 My whole life the answer you claim,” the boy
 said,
 “For joy does not kill!”

Back again the faint head

Declined on the nun’s gentle bosom. She saw
 His lips quiver, and motion’d the Duke to
 withdraw
 And leave them a moment together.

He eyed

Them both with a wistful regard; turn’d, and
 sigh’d,
 And lifted the tent-door, and pass’d from the
 tent.

xxxv.

Like a furnace, the fervid, intense occident
 From its hot seething levels a great glare
 struck up
 On the sick metal sky. And, as out of a cup
 Some witch watches boiling wild portents arise,
 Monstrous clouds, mass’d, misshapen, and
 ting’d with strange dyes,
 Hover’d over the red fume, and changed to
 weird shapes
 As of snakes, salamanders, efts, lizards, storks,
 apes,

Chimeras, and hydras: whilst—ever the same
 In the midst of all these (creatures fused by
 his flame,
 And changed by his influence!) changeless, as
 when,
 Ere he lit down to death generations of men
 O'er that crude and ungainly creation, which
 there
 With wild shapes this cloud-world seem'd to
 mimic in air,
 The eye of Heaven's all-judging witness, he
 shone,
 And shall shine on the ages we reach not—the
 sun!

xxxvi.

Nature-posted her parable thus in the skies,
 And the man's heart bore witness. Life's
 vapors arise
 And fall, pass and change, group themselves
 and revolve
 Round the great central life, which is Love:
 these dissolve
 And resume themselves, here assume beauty,
 there terror;
 And the phantasmagoria of infinite error,
 And endless complexity, lasts but a while;
 Life's self, the immortal, immutable smile
 Of God, on the soul, in the deep heart of
 Heaven
 Lives changeless, unchanged: and our morn-
 ing and even
 Are earth's alternations, not Heaven's.

XXXVII.

While he yet
 Watch'd the skies, with this thought in his
 heart; while he set
 Thus unconsciously all his life forth in his
 mind,
 Summ'd it up, search'd it out, proved it vapor
 and wind,
 And embraced the new life which that hour
 had reveal'd,—
 Love's life, which earth's life had defaced and
 conceal'd;
 Lucile left the tent and stood by him.

Her tread
 Aroused him; and, turning toward her, he
 said:

“O Sœur Seraphine, are you happy?”

“Eugene,
 What is happier than to have hoped not in
 vain?”

She answer'd—“And you?”

“Yes.”

“You do not repent?”

“No.”

“Thank Heaven!” she murmur'd. He mus-
 ingly bent

His looks on the sunset, and somewhat apart
 Where he stood, sigh'd, as though to his inner-
 most heart,

“O bless'd are they, amongst whom I was not,
 Whose morning unclouded, without stain or
 spot,

Predicts a pure evening; who, sunlike, in
 light

Have traversed, unsullied, the world, and set
bright!"

But she in response, "Mark yon ship far away,
Asleep on the wave, in the last light of day,
With all its hush'd thunders shut up! Would
you know

A thought which came to me a few days ago,
Whilst watching those ships? . . . When the
great Ship of Life

Surviving, though shatter'd, the tumult and
strife

Of earth's angry element,—mast broken short,
Decks drench'd, bulwarks beaten—driven safe
into port,

When the Pilot of Galilee, seen on the strand,
Stretches over the waters a welcoming hand;
When, heeding no longer the sea's baffled
roar,

The mariner turns to his rest evermore;
What will then be the answer the helmsman
must give?

Will it be . . . 'Lo our log-book! Thus once
did we live

In the zones of the South; thus we traversed
the seas

Of the Orient; there dwelt with the Hesper-
ides;

Thence follow'd the west wind; here, east-
ward we turn'd;

The stars fail'd us there; just here land we dis-
cern'd

On our lee; there the storm overtook us at last;
That day went the bowsprit, the next day the
mast;

There the mermen came round us, and there
we saw bask

A siren? The Captain of Port will he ask
Any one of such questions? I cannot think so!
But . . . 'What is the last Bill of Health you
can show?'

Not—How fared the soul through the trials
she pass'd?

But—What is the state of that soul at the last?"
"May it be so!" he sigh'd. "There the sun
drops, behold!"

And indeed, whilst he spake all the purple and
gold

In the west had turn'd ashen, save one fading
strip

Of light that yet gleam'd from the dark nether
lip

Of a long reef of cloud; and o'er sullen ravines
And ridges the raw damp were hanging white
screens

Of melancholy mist.

"*Nunc dimittis!*" she said.

"O God of the living! whilst yet 'mid the dead
And the dying we stand here alive, and Thy
days

Returning, admit space for prayer and for
praise,

In both these confirm us!

"The helmsman, Eugene,
Needs the compass to steer by. Pray always.

Again

We two part: each to work out Heaven's will:
you, I trust,

In the world's ample witness; and I, as I must,

In secret and silence: you, love, fame, await;
 Me, sorrow and sickness. We meet at one
 gate

When all's over. The ways they are many
 and wide,

And seldom are two ways the same. Side by
 side

May we stand at the same little door when all's
 done!

The ways they are many, the end it is one.

He that knocketh shall enter: who asks shall
 obtain:

And who seeketh, he findeth. Remember,
 Eugene!"

She turn'd to depart.

"Whither? whither?" . . . he said.

She stretched forth her hand where, already
 outspread

On the darken'd horizon, remotely they saw

The French camp-fires kindling.

"See yonder vast host, with its manifold heart
 Made as one man's by one hope! The hope
 'tis your part

To aid toward achievement, to save from re-
 verse:

Mine, through suffering to soothe, and through
 sickness to nurse.

I go to my work: you to yours."

XXXVIII.

Whilst she spoke,
 On the wide wasting evening there distantly
 broke

The low roll of musketry. Straightway, anon,

From the dim Flag-staff Battery bellow'd a
gun.

“Our chasseurs are at it!” he mutter'd.

She turn'd,
Smiled, and pass'd up the twilight.

He faintly discern'd
Her form, now and then, on the flat lurid sky
Rise, and sink, and recede through the mists:
by and by

The vapors closed round, and he saw her no
more.

XXXIX.

Nor shall we. For her mission, accomplish'd,
is o'er.

The mission of genius on earth! To uplift,
Purify, and confirm by its own gracious gift,
The world, in despite of the world's dull en-
deavor

To degrade, and drag down, and oppose it for-
ever.

The mission of genius: to watch, and to wait,
To renew, to redeem, and to regenerate.

The mission of woman on earth! to give birth
To the mercy of Heaven descending on earth.

The mission of woman: permitted to bruise
The head of the serpent, and sweetly infuse,
Through the sorrow and sin of earth's regis-
ter'd curse,

The blessing which mitigates all: born to
nurse,

And to soothe, and to solace, to help and to heal
The sick world that leans on her. This was
Lucile.

XL.

A power hid in pathos: a fire veil'd in cloud:
 Yet still burning outward: a branch which,
 though bow'd
 By the bird in its passage, springs upward
 again:
 Through all symbols I search for her sweet-
 ness—in vain!
 Judge her love by her life. For our life is but
 love
 In act. Pure was hers; and the dear God
 above,
 Who knows what His creatures have need of
 for life,
 And whose love includes all loves, through
 much patient strife
 Led her soul into peace. Love, though love
 may be given
 In vain, is yet lovely. Her own native heaven
 More clearly she mirror'd, as life's troubled
 dream
 Wore away; and love sigh'd into rest, like a
 stream
 That breaks its heart over wild rocks toward
 the shore
 Of the great sea which hushes it up evermore
 With its little wild wailing. No stream from
 its source
 Flows seaward, how lonely soever its course,
 But what some land is gladden'd. No star
 ever rose
 And set without influence somewhere. Who
 knows
 What earth needs from earth's lowest creature?
 No life

Can be pure in its purpose and strong in its
strife

And all life not be purer and stronger thereby.
The spirits of just men made perfect on high,
The army of martyrs who stand by the Throne
And gaze into the face that makes glorious
their own,

Know this, surely, at last. Honest love, hon-
est sorrow,

Honest work for the day, honest hope for the
morrow,

Are these worth nothing more than the hand
they make weary,

The heart they have sadden'd, the life they
leave dreary?

Hush! the sevenfold heavens to the voice of
the Spirit

Echo: He that o'ercometh shall all things in-
herit.

XLI.

The moon was, in fire, carried up through the
fog.

The loud fortress bark'd at her like a chain'd
dog.

The horizon pulsed flame, the air sound. All
without,

War and winter, and twilight, and terror, and
doubt;

All within, light, warmth, calm!

In the twilight, longwhile
Eugene de Luvois, with a deep, thoughtful
smile,

Linger'd, looking, and listening, lone by the
tent.

At last he withdrew, and night closed as he
went.

THE END.

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