

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,  
Bowed 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 furled  
Far away from the heart of the woman. Her hand  
Drooped, and from it, unloosed from their frail silken band,  
Fell those early love-letters, strewn, scattered, and shed  
At her feet—life's lost blossoms! Dejected, her head  
On her bosom was bowed. Her gaze vaguely strayed 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 perished years.  
They avenged themselves now, and she burst into tears.

## CANTO IV.

## I.

*Letter from COUSIN JOHN to COUSIN ALFRED.*

"BIGORRE, Thursday.

"TIME up, you rascal! Come back, or be hanged.

Matilda grows peevish. Her mother harangued

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 betrothed; and perplexed

"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 warned 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, alarmed 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 existence,  
'Twas a phantom he grasped.

## III.

Having sent for his guide,  
He ordered 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 Vargrave 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 solitudes;  
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 bluebell is born,  
And the wild rhododendron first reddens at morn;  
Where the source of the waters is fine as a thread;  
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 whispered to him all their thousand love-tales;  
He has laughed with the girls, he has leaped 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 slackened their pace,  
And the marvellous prospect each moment changed face.  
The breezy and pure inspirations of morn  
Breathed about them. The scarp'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 wildernesses;  
The waters went wrirling above and around,  
The forests hung heaped in their shadows profound.  
Here the Larboust, and there Aventin, Castellon,  
Which the Demon of Tempest, descending upon,  
Had wasted with fire, and the peaceful Cazeaux  
They marked; and far down in the sunshine below,  
Half dipped in a valley of airiest blue,

The white happy homes of the vil-  
lage 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 alche-  
mic sun,  
Fused their splendors of crimson and  
crystal in one ;  
And deep in the moss gleamed the  
delicate shells,  
And the dew lingered fresh in the  
heavy harebells ;  
The large violet burned ; the cam-  
panula blue ;  
And Autumn's own flower, the saf-  
fron, peered through  
The red-berried brambles and thick  
sassafras ;  
And fragrant with thyme was the  
delicate grass ;  
And high up, and higher, and high-  
est of all,  
The secular phantom of snow !  
O'er the wall  
Of a gray sunless glen gaping drowsy  
below,  
That aerial spectre, revealed 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 baf-  
fles the sight.  
Only reached by the vast rosy ripple  
of light,  
And the cool star of eve, the Im-  
perial 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 furled

'Mid the clouds beyond which  
spreads the infinite world  
Of man's last aspirations, unfathom-  
ed, untrod,  
Save by Even and Morn, and the  
angels of God.

## VII.

Meanwhile, as they journeyed, that  
serpentine road,  
Now abruptly reversed, unexpect-  
edly showed  
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  
Showed him, joyously ambling be-  
side 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 to-  
gether. Soon after  
His sudden appearance suspended  
their laughter.

## 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 regathered its numbers.  
Lucile was as pale  
As the cloud 'neath their feet, on its  
way to the vale.  
The Duke had observed it, nor quit-  
ted 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 this jealousy ad-  
ded 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, gathered closer, and  
rose and increased.  
The air changed and chilled. 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 looked at each other, and halt-  
ed, and there  
Unbuckled the cloaks from the sad-  
dles. The white  
Aspens rustled, and turned up their  
frail leaves in fright.  
All announced the approach of the  
tempest.

## Ere long,

Thick darkness descended the moun-  
tains among ;  
And a vivid, vindictive, and serpen-  
tine 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, every one.  
The Duke's in a moment was far out  
of sight.  
The guides whooped. The band was  
obliged to alight ;  
And, dispersed up the perilous path-  
way, walked blind  
To the darkness before from the  
darkness behind.

## XI.

And the Storm is abroad in the  
mountains !

He fills

The crouched hollows and all the  
oracular hills  
With dread voices of power. A  
roused million or more  
Of wild echoes reluctantly rise from  
their hoar  
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  
mountain 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 destruc-  
tion and terror,  
Up the desolate heights, 'mid  
tricate error  
Of mountain and mist.

## XII.

There is war in the skies !  
Lo ! the black-winged legions of tem-  
pest arise  
O'er those sharp splintered rocks  
that are gleaming below  
In the soft light, so fair and so fatal,  
as though  
Some seraph burned through them  
the thunder-bolt searching  
Which the black cloud unbosomed  
just now. Lo ! the lurching  
And shivering pine-trees, like phan-  
toms, 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, appalled  
at the sight  
Of the things seen in heaven !

## XIII.

Through the darkness and awe  
That had gathered around him, Lord  
Alfred now saw,  
Revealed 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 cheek 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 rushed on.  
For one moment the blue lightning  
swathed the whole stone  
In its lurid embrace: like the sleek  
dazzling snake  
That encircles a sorceress, charmed  
for her sake  
And lulled by her loveliness; fawn-  
ing, it played  
And caressingly twined round the  
feet and the head  
Of the woman who sat there, un-  
daunted 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 bas-  
tion, all round,  
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 approached her. In  
terror, her hand

Alfred Vargrave had seized within  
his; and he felt  
The light fingers that coldly and lin-  
geringly dwelt  
In the grasp of his own, tremble  
faintly.

"See! see!  
Where the whirlwind hath stricken  
and strangled yon tree!"  
She exclaimed, . . . "like the pas-  
sion that brings on its breath,  
To the being it embraces, destruc-  
tion and death!  
Alfred Vargrave, the lightning is  
round 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 demand"—

"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 bequeathed to me all the sad  
right to restore,

To retrieve, to amend! I, who in-  
jured 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 dark-  
ness o'erhead.  
With a voice faint and marred by  
emotion, she said,  
"And your pledge to another?"

## XVI.

"Hush, hush!" he exclaimed,  
"My honor will live where my love  
lives, unshamed.  
'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, sup-  
pressing a lie?  
Alas, no! *your* hand holds my whole  
destiny.  
I can never recall what my lips have  
avowed;  
In your love lies whatever can render  
me proud.  
For the great crime of all my exist-  
ence hath been  
To have known you in vain. And  
the duty best seen,  
And most hallowed,—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 dimmed in  
the dust of the world,  
When our souls their white wings  
yet exulting, unfurled!  
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, distract-  
ed. In truth  
I have wearily wandered the world,  
and I feel  
That the least of your lovely regards,  
O Lucile,  
Is worth all the world can afford, and  
the dream  
Which, though followed forever, for-  
ever 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 reverse, all the passion-  
ate 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 reposed,  
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 flushed transparently through  
The delicate, pallid, and pure olive hue  
Of the cheek, half averted and drooped. The rich bosom  
Heaved, as when in the heart of a ruffled rose-blossom  
A bee is imprisoned 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 crags,  
Its artillery silenced, its banners in rags,  
The rear of the tempest its sullen retreat  
Drew off slowly, receding in silence, 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 covered with kisses  
The redolent warmth of those long falling tresses.  
Neither he, nor Lucile, felt the rain, which not yet  
Had ceased falling around them; when, splashed, drenched, 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 leaped 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  
In the presence of nature's immensities? Say,  
Have you hung o'er the torrent, bedewed with its spray,  
And, leaving the rock-way, contorted and rolled,  
Like a huge couchant Typhon, fold heaped over fold,  
Tracked 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 profound?  
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 swelled

At the vision revealed. On the overworked soil  
Of this planet, enjoyment is sharpened by toil;  
And one seems, by the pain of ascending the height,  
To have conquered a claim to 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 whitened their wings,  
And the thirst of the seraphs is quenched at thy springs.  
What hand hath, in heaven, upheld thine expanse?  
When the breath of creation first fashioned 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 thy secret thou keepest, and I will keep mine;  
For once gazing on thee, it flashed 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, marked 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 reposed.  
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 passed,  
Drew into its bosom the darkness, and only [lonely  
Admitted within it one image,—a  
And tremulous phantom of flickering light  
That followed the mystical moon through the night.

## XXIII.

It was late when o'er Serchon at last they descended.  
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  
conceived,  
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 began !  
And the happiest, noblest, and best  
part of man  
Is the part which he never hath  
fully played out :  
For the first and last word in life's  
volume is—Doubt.  
The face the most fair to our vision  
allowed  
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 forever !

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 ques-  
tioned, say, . . . . "What  
I would have remained, or become,  
I am not" ?

We are ever behind, or beyond, or  
beside [hide

Our intrinsic existence. Forever at  
And seek with our souls. Not in  
Hades alone

Doth Sisyphus roll, ever frustrate,  
the stone,

Do the Danaïds ply, ever vainly, the  
sieve.

Tasks as futile does earth to its den-  
izens 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 circumstance

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 im-  
perfection 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 migh-  
ty 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 shattered, 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 deeps of my soul, and pos-  
sessed 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 afforded

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

But, far down, in the depth of my  
life's mystery

(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 coral-  
line halls,

'Mid the world's adamantine and  
dim pedestals ;

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

The almondine glimmers, the soft  
sapphires bloom)—

Thou abidest and reignest forever,  
O Queen

Of that better world which thou  
swayest unseen !

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—be-  
loved, thou art there !

And whatever is noblest in aught  
that I do, [too.

Is done to exalt and to worship thee

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

Cannot take thee away from me  
now. I have furled

The wings of my spirit about thy  
bright head ;

At thy feet are my soul's immortal-  
ities spread.

Thou mightest have been to me  
much. Thou art more.

And in silence I worship, in dark-  
ness adore.

If life be not that which without us  
we find—

Chance, accident, merely—but rath-  
er the mind,

And the soul which, within us, sur-  
viveth 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 hope-  
less 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 repose

Unconvulsed by alarm, once con-  
fused in the throes

Of a tumult divine, sea and land,  
moist and dry,

And in fiery fusion commixed earth  
and sky.

Time cooled it, and calmed it, and  
taught it to go

The round of its orbit in peace, long  
ago.