

"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.

The wind changeth and whirleth continually :
 All the rivers run down and run into the sea :
 The wind whirleth about, and is presently stilled :
 All the rivers run down, yet the sea is not filled :
 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 erroneous position.*"
 Thought obtruded 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.
 (Every 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 deemed 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 failed 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 involved
 All its hopes in the tie which must now be dissolved.
 'Twere a false sense of honor in me to suppress
 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 deemed I had done
 With the wild heart of youth, and looked hopefully on
 To the soberer manhood, the worthier life,
 Which I sought in the love that I vowed 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 harrowed 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 disguised,
 In himself ; but he did not feel sure that he knew,
 Or completely possessed, what, half hidden from view,
 Remained 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 linked 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 reached him at last from Lucile.
 At the sight of the very first word that he read,
 That letter dropped 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 passed his hand hurriedly over his eyes,
 Bewildered, incredulous. Angry sur-

And dismay, in one sharp moan,
broke from him. Anon
He picked up the page, and read rapidly on.

IX.

The COMTESS 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 clasped 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 re-
pentance! 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 O, deem not it was
with the thought

Or your heart to regain, or the past
to reawaken.

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

Conviction, at least, that our meet-
ing would be

Without peril to *you*, although haply
to me

The salvation of all my existence.

"I own,
When the rumor first reached me,
which lightly made known

To the world your engagement, my
heart and my mind

Suffered 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 weakened 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

Perished youth: and his image, se-
rene 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, O, then,

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

Reconciled to the world; and, re-
leased from regret,

Take the lot fate accords to my
choice.'

"So we met.
But the danger I did not foresee has
occurred:

The danger, alas, to yourself! I have
erred.

But happy for both that this error
hath been

Discovered 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 dis-
cern:

Doubt is over; my future is fixed
now.

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

If, one moment, you wandered, think
only it was

More deeply to bury the past love.

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 avowed 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 rendered 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 re-
morse

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 deepened the old demarca-
tions 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 henceforth side by side,

I should have revolted forever, and
shocked,

Your respect for the world's plausi-
bilities, mocked,

Without meaning to do so, and out-
raged, all those

Social creeds which you live by.

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 Var-
grave.

"LUCILE."

X.

So ended that letter.

The room seemed to reel
Round and round in the mist that
was scorching 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 passed from his chamber. He felt both oppressed
And excited. The letter he thrust in his breast,
And, in search of fresh air and of solitude, passed
The long lime-trees of Serchon. His footsteps at last
Reached a bare narrow heath by the skirts of a wood :
It was sombre and silent, and suited his mood.
By a mineral spring, long unused, now unknown,
Stood a small ruined abbey. He reached 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 rolled from his mind
The raw mist of resentment which first made him blind
To the pathos breathed through it. Tears rose in his eyes,
And a hope sweet and strange in his heart seemed to rise.
The truth which he saw not the first time he read
That letter, he now saw,—that each word betrayed
The love which the writer had sought to conceal.
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 ere long, free as air to revoke that farewell,
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 spoiled 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 implore

That great blessing on life you alone can confer,"

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

Thus still with the letter outspread on his knee

He followed so fondly his own reverery,

That he felt not the angry regard of a man

Fixed upon him ; he saw not a face stern and wan

Turned towards him ; he heard not a footstep that passed

And repassed the lone spot where he stood, till at last

A hoarse voice aroused him.

He looked 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 allusion

To "the doubtless sublime reveries his intrusion

Had, he feared, 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 passed 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 looked in the Duke's haggard face,

He was pained by the change there he could not but trace.

And he almost felt pity.

He therefore put by each remark from the Duke with some careless reply,

And coldly, but courteously, waving away

The ill-humor the Duke seemed resolved to display,

Rose, and turned, 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 any 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 crossed 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 reproached 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 conceive

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 offered?"
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 vanity, wanton and cruel withal,
And the wish an ascendancy lost to recall,
That you stepped 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 galled 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-perished race,
With, for witness, the stern Autumn Sky overhead,
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 he appeared, 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 woollen capote; and the rein,
A mere hempen cord on a curb.
Up the plau
He wheeled his horse, white with the foam on his flank,
Leaped the rivulet lightly, turned sharp from the bank,

And, approaching the Duke, raised his woollen capote,
Bowed low in the selle, and delivered a note.

XX.

The two stood astonished. The Duke, with a gest
Of apology, turned, stretched his hand, and possessed
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 watched him, he turned 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 warned you, milord, I should still persevere.
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 engaged
By aught that could sanction resentment. He said
Not a word, but turned round, took the letter, and read . . .

The COMTESSE DE NEVERS to the DUC DE LUVOIS.

"SAINT SAVIOUR.

"Your letter, which followed 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 bowed;
Placed the note in his bosom; addressed, half aloud,
A few words to the messenger: . . .
"Say your despatch
Will be answered ere nightfall;" then glanced at his watch,
And turned back to the Baths.

XXIII.

Alfred Vargrave stood still,
Torn, distracted in heart, and divided in will.
He turned to Lucile's farewell letter to him,
And read over her words; rising tears made them dim;
"Doubt is over: my future is fixed 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 unrequented 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 looked 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 walked on, but not Back toward Serchon: he walked on, but knew not in what Direction, nor yet with what object, indeed,
Lie was walking; but still he walked on without heed.

XXVI.

The day had been sullen; but, towards his decline,
The sun sent a stream of wild light up the pine.
Darkly denting the red light revealed at its back,
The old ruined 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 site 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 preyed on his own!

XXVII.

By the thoughts in his breast
With varying impulse divided and torn,
He traversed the scant heath, and reached the forlorn
Autumn woodland, in which but a short while ago
He had seen the Duke rapidly enter; and so

He too entered. The light waned around him, and passed
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 sighed 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 dost 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, concealed 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 eldrich, and eerie, and strange is the place!
The castle betokens a date long gone by.
He crosses the court-yard 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 obsolete dress,
Strange portraits regard him with looks of surprise,
Strange forms from the arras start forth to his eyes;
Strange epigraphs, blazoned, burn out of the wall:
The spell of a wizard is over it all.
In her chamber, enchanted, the Princess is sleeping
The sleep which for centuries she has been keeping.
If she smile in her sleep, it must be to some lover
Whose lost golden locks the long grasses now cover:
If she moan in her dream, it must be to deplore
Some grief which the world cares to hear of no more.
But how fair is her forehead, how calm seems her cheek!

And how sweet must that voice be, if once she would speak
He looks and he loves her; but knows he (not he!)
The clew to unravel this old mystery?
And he stoops to those shut lips. The shapes on the wall,
The mute men in armor around him, and all
The weird figures frown, as though striving to say,
'Halt! invade not the Past, reckless child of To-day!
And give not, O madman! the heart in thy breast
To a phantom, the soul of whose sense is possessed
By an Age not thine own!'
"But unconscious is he,
And he heeds not the warning, he cares not to see
Aught but one form before him!
"Rash, wild words are o'er
And the vision is vanished 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 waking 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.

Eugène de Luvois was a man who, in part
From strong physical health, and that vigor of heart