

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

Which physical health gives, and partly, perchance,
 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 trifter he was not. When rose-leaves it rifles,
 No less than when oak-trees it ruins, the wind
 Its pleasure pursues with impetuous mind.
 Both Eugène 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,
 Seemed amiable foibles, by Luvois pursued
 With impetuous passion, seemed semi-Satanic.
 Half pleased you see brooks play with pebbles; in panic
 You watch them whirled 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 possessed
 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 revered,
 Were to him illegitimate.
 Thus, he appeared
 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 this vigor of nature, and tension of will,
 That found for the first time—perchance 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 joined
 The terror of missing his life's destination,
 Which in her had its mystical representation.

III.

And truly, the thought of it, scaring him, passed
 O'er his heart, while he now through the twilight rode fast.
 As a shade from the wing of some great bird obscure
 In a wild silent land may be suddenly seen,
 Darkening over the sands, where it startles and scares
 Some traveller strayed in the waste unawares,
 So that thought more than once darkened over his heart
 For a moment, and rapidly seemed to depart.
 Fast and furious he rode through the thickets which rose
 Up the shaggy hillside ; and the quarrelling crows
 Clanged above him, and clustering down the dim air
 Dropped into the dark woods. By fits here and there
 Shepherd fires faintly gleamed from the valleys. O, how

He envied the wings of each wild bird, as now
 He urged the steed over the dizzy ascent
 Of the mountains ! 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 cataracts,
 And the loose earth and loose stones rolled 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
 Walked abroad and conversed with each other. The trees
 Were in sound and in motion, and muttered like seas
 In Elfand. The road through the forest was hollowed.
 On he sped through the darkness, as though he were followed
 Fast, fast by the Erl king !
 The wild wizard-work
 Of the forest at last opened sharp, o'er the fork
 Of a savage ravine, and behind the black stems
 Of the last trees, whose leaves in the light gleamed like gems,
 Broke the broad moon above the voluminous
 Rock-chaos, — the Hecate of that Tartarus !
 With his horse reeking white, he at last reached 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 leaped 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 seemed to move.
 At the door the old negress was nodding her head
 As he reached it. " My mistress awaits you," she said.
 And up the rude stairway of creaking pine rafter
 He followed her silent. A few moments after,
 His heart almost stunned him, his head seemed to reel,
 For a door closed—Luvois was alone with Lucile.

IV.

In a gray travelling dress, her daik hair unconfined
 Streaming o'er it, and tossed now and then by the wind
 From the lattice, that waved 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 seemed 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 letter 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 knighthood 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 soiled and dishonored 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 drooped 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 seemed 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 passed, Pity crept, and perchance o'er her conscience a tear, Falling softly, awoke it.

However severe,

Were they unjust, to these sudden upbraidings, to her ? Had she lightly misconstrued this man's character, Which had seemed, even when most impassioned it seemed, Too self-conscious to lose all in love ? Had she deemed That this airy, gay, insolent man of the world, So proud of the place the world gave him, held furled 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 supplies 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, Had she taken that love for the love of the sea ?

v.

At that thought, from her aspect whatever had been Stern or haughty departed ; and, humbled in mien, She approached him, and brokenly murmured, 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, your esteem I may claim on one ground,—I at least am sincere. You say that to me from the first it was clear That you loved me. But what if this knowledge were known At a moment in life when I felt most alone, And 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, Eugène de Luvois, If I hoped to see all this, or deemed 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 deemed my heart free From all, saving sorrow. I deemed 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 !"

LUVOIS.

O, again, Yet again, say that thrice-blessed word ! say, Lucile, That you then deigned 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 ?

LUVOIS.

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 cherished 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 recrosses 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 wronged years ago!"
Lucile faintly, brokenly murmured, . . . "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 ruined it be,
Since so dear is that ruin, ah, yield it to me!"
He approached her. She shrank back. The grief in her eyes
Answered, "No!"
An emotion more fierce seemed 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? O, 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 whispered 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 animal
In the bosom of man was 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, rushed upon him; fierce jealousy, swelled
By all passions bred from it, and ever impelled
To involve all things else in the anguish within it,
And on others inflict its own pangs!
At that minute
What passed 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
Reached that room, through the dark evening air, save the 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 defenceless before him!
The triumph and bliss of his rival flashed o'er him.
The abyss of his own black despair seemed to ope
At his feet, with that awful exclusion of hope
Which Dante read over the city of doom.
All the Tarquin passed into his soul in the gloom,
And, uttering words he dared never recall,
Words of insult and menace, he thundered down all
The brewed storm-cloud within him: its flashes scorched blind
His own senses. His spirit was driven on the wind
Of a reckless emotion beyond his control;
A torrent seemed loosened within him. His soul
Surged up from that caldron of passion that hissed
And seethed in his heart.

VII.

He had thrown, and had missed
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 abashed to perdition. I know
If Lucretia at Tarquin but once had looked so,
She had needed no dagger next morning.
She rose
And swept to the door, like that phantom the snows
Feel at nightfall sweep o'er them, when daylight is gone,
And Caucasus is with the moon all alone.
There she paused; and, as though from immeasurable,
Insurpassable distance, she murmured—
"Farewell!
We, alas! have mistaken each other. Once more
Illusion, to-night, in my lifetime is o'er.
Duc de Luvois, adieu!"
From the heart-breaking gloom
Of that vacant, reproachful, and desolate room,
He felt she was gone,—gone forever!

IX.

No word,
The sharpest that ever was edged by a sword,
Could have pierced to his heart with such keen accusation
As the silence, the sudden profound isolation,
In which he remained.
"O, return; I repent!"
He exclaimed; but no sound through the stillness was sent,
Save the roar of the water, in answer to him,
And the beetle that, sleeping, yet hummed her night-hymn:
An indistinct anthem, that troubled the air
With a searching, and wistful, and questioning prayer.
"Return," sung the wandering insect. The roar
Of the waters replied, "Nevermore! nevermore!"

He walked to the window. The spray on his brow
Was flung cold from the whirlpools of water below;
The frail wooden balcony shook in the sound
Of the torrent. The mountains gloomed sullenly round
A candle one ray from a closed case-ment flung.
O'er the dim balustrade all bewildered he hung,
Vaguely watching the broken and shimmering blink
Of the stars on the veering and vitreous brink
Of that snake-like prone column of water; and listing
Aloof o'er the languors of air the persisting
Sharp horn of the gray gnat. Before he relinquished
His unconscious employment, that light was extinguished.
Wheels, at last, from the inn door aroused him. He ran
Down the stairs; reached the door—just to see her depart.
Down the mountain the carriage was speeding.

x.

His heart
Pealed the knell of its last hope. He rushed on; but whither
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; [deavor
Before him a Future devoid of end—And purpose. He felt a remorse for the one,
Of the other a fear. What remained 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 passed o'er him; an angry remorse
Of his own frantic failure and error had marred
Such a refuge forever. The future seemed barred
By the corpse of a dead hope o'er which he must tread
To attain it. Life's wilderness round him was spread.
What clew there to cling by?
He clung by a name
To a dynasty fallen forever. He came
Of an old princely house, true through change to the race
And the sword of Saint Louis,—a faith 'twere disgrace
To relinquish, and folly to live for!
Nor less
Was his ancient religion (once potent to bless
Or to ban; and the crozier his ancestors kneeled
To adore, when they fought for the Cross, in hard field,
With the Crescent) become ere it reached him, tradition;
A mere faded badge of a social position;
A thing to retain and say nothing about,
Lest, if used, it should draw degradation from doubt.
Thus, the first time he sought them, the creeds of his youth
Wholly failed the strong needs of his manhood, in truth!

And beyond them, what region of refuge? what field
For employment, this civilized age, did it yield,
In that civilized land? or to thought? or to action?
Blind deliriums, bewildered and endless distraction!
Not even a desert, not even the cell
Of a hermit to flee to, wherein he might quell
The wild devil-instincts which now, unrepent,
Run riot through that ruined world in his breast.

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 round with the invisible Power
That walked the dim world by Himself at that hour.
But their language he had not yet learned—in despite
Of the much he *had* learned—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 heaped themselves over the bare west in crowds
Of misshapen, incongruous portents. A green
Streak of dreary, cold, luminous ether, between
The base of their black barricades, and the ridge
Of the grim world, gleamed ghastly, as under some bridge,
Cyclop-sized, in a city of ruins o'er-thrown
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 revealed, through a loop
In the breached dark, the blemished 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,
Darkened round him. One object alone—that gray cross—
Glimmered faint on the dark. Gazing up, he descried
Through the void air, its desolate arms outstretched wide,
As though to embrace him.
He turned from the sight,
Set his face to the darkness, and fled.

xii.

When the light
Of the dawn grayly flickered 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

Towards Serchon.

Thus riding, with eyes of defiance
Set against the young day, as dis-
claiming alliance

With aught that the day brings to
man, he perceived

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.
Eugène de Luvois,

With the sense of a strange second
sight, when he saw

That phantom-like face, could at
once recognize,

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 fixed keen-
ly on him.

And, to meet it, a lie leaped at once
to his own;

A lie born of that lying darkness now
grown

Over all in his nature! He answered
that gaze

With a look which, if ever a man's
look conveys

More intensely than words what a
man means, conveyed

Beyond doubt in its smile an an-
nouncement which said,

"I have triumphed. 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 impelled, by one
wild fear pursued,

And led by one instinct, which seem-
ed to exclude

From his mind every human sensa-
tion, save one—

The torture of doubt—had strayed
moodily on,

Down the highway deserted, that
evening in which

With the Duke he had parted;
strayed on, through the rich

Haze of sunset, or into the gradual
night,

Which darkened, unnoticed, the
land from his sight,

Toward Saint Saviour; nor did the
changed aspect of all

The wild scenery round him avail to
recall (tions, until,

To his senses their normal percep-
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, slipped
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 unfurled,

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, per-
force, to get back

To Serchon; nor yet then the Duke
had returned!

He listened, he looked up the dark,
but discerned

Not a trace, not a sound of a horse
by the way.

He knew that the night was ap-
proaching to day.

He resolved to proceed to Saint
Saviour. The morn

Which, at last, through the forest
broke chill and forlorn,

Revealed to him, riding toward Ser-
chon, the Duke.

'Twas then that the two men ex-
changed look for look.

XV.

And the Duke's rankled in him.

XVI.

He rushed on. He tore
His path through the thicket. He

reached the inn door,
Roused the yet drowsing porter, re-

luctant to rise,
And inquired for the Countess. The

man rubbed 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 stranger," he cried,

"Who had been there that night!"

The man grinned and replied,
With a vacant intelligence, "He, O

ay, ay!
He went after the lady."

No further reply
Could he give. Alfred Vargrave de-

manded no more,
Flung a coin to the man, and so

turned from the door.
"What! the Duke then the night in

that lone inn had passed?
In that lone inn—with her!" Was

that look he had cast
When they met in the forest, that

look which remained
On his mind with its terrible smile,

thus explained?
XVII.

The day was half turned to the even-
ing, before

He re-entered Serchon, with a heart
sick and sore.

In the midst of a light crowd of bab-
blers, his look,

By their voices attracted, distinguish-
ed the Duke,

Gay, insolent, noisy, with eyes spark-
ling bright, [ous.

With laughter, shrill, airy, contin-
Right

Through the throng Alfred Varg-
grave, with swift sombre

stride,
Glided on. The Duke noticed him,

turned, stepped aside,
And, cordially grasping his hand,

whispered 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 uttered that word,
He turned 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, stunned 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 control.
Does he hear in a dream, through

the buzz of the crowd,
The Duke's blithe associates, bab-

bling aloud
Some comment upon his gay humor

that day?
He never was gayer: what makes

him so gay?
'Tis, no doubt, say the flatterers,

flattering in tune,
Some vestal whose virtue no tongue

dare impugn
Has at last found a Mars,—who, of

course, shall be nameless,
The vestal that yields to Mars *only*

is blameless!
Hark! hears he a name which, thus

syllabled, stirs
All his heart into tumult? . . . Lu-

cile de Nevers

With the Duke's coupled gayly, in
some laughing, light,
Free allusion? Not so as might
give him the right
To turn fiercely round on the
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 downward course
O'er his nature, with gathered mo-
mentum and force,
THE WORLD.

XIX.

"No!" he muttered, "she cannot
have sinned!
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 loveliest 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 fare-
well!* 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 bowed, as though
By the weight of the heart's resigna-
tion, 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 travelling-carriage, unnoticed, he
passed.

He ordered his horse to be ready
anon:
Sent, and paid, for the reckoning,
and slowly passed on,
And ascended the staircase, and en-
tered 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 print-
ed 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 bank-
er, well-known
As wearing the longest-phyllacteried
gown
Of all the rich Pharisees England
can boast of;
A shrewd Puritan Sect, whose sharp
wits made the most of

This world and the next; having
largely invested
Not only where treasure is never
molested
By thieves, moth, or rust; but on this
earthly ball
Where interest was high, and secur-
ity small,
Of mankind there was never a theory
yet
Not by some individual instance up-
set:
And so to that sorrowful verse of the
Psalm
Which declares that the wicked ex-
pand like the palm
In a world where the righteous are
stunted and pent,
A cheering exception did Ridley pre-
sent.
Like the worthy of Uz, Heaven prosper-
ed his piety.
The leader of every religious society,
Christian knowledge he labored
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 door-
way protruded;
"Sir Ridley MacNab with Milord
wished to speak."
Alfred Vargrave could feel there
were tears on his cheek:
He brushed them away with a ges-
ture of pride.
He glanced at the glass; when his
own face he eyed,
He was scared by its pallor. Inclin-
ing 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,—dis-
tributing tracts,
Sowing seed by the way, and collect-
ing new facts
For Exeter Hall; he was starting
that night
For Bigorre: he had heard, to his
cordial delight,
That Lord Alfred was there, and,
himself, setting out
For the same destination: impatient,
no doubt!
Here some commonplace compli-
ments as to "the marriage"
Through his speech trickled softly,
like honey: his carriage
Was ready. A storm seemed to
threaten the weather:
If his young friend agreed, why not
travel together?

With a footstep uncertain and rest-
less, a frown
Of perplexity, during this speech,
up and down
Alfred Vargrave was striding; but,
after a pause
And a slight hesitation, the which
seemed to cause
Some surprise to Sir Ridley, he an-
swered,—*"My dear
Sir Ridley, allow me a few moments
here—
Half an hour at the most—to con-
clude an affair
Of a nature so urgent as hardly to
spare
My presence (which brought me, in-
deed, to this spot),
Before I accept your kind offer."*
"Why not?"

Said Sir Ridley, and smiled. Alfred Vargrave, before Sir Ridley observed it, had passed through the door. A few moments later, with footsteps revealing Intense agitation of uncontrolled feeling, [low. He was rapidly pacing the garden be- What passed 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 Betrayed there the least agitation. "The place You so kindly have offered," he said, "I accept." And he stretched out his hand. The two travellers stepped 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 Zophar, "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 en- sconced, the two men Began to converse, somewhat drow- sily, 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 believe

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 snapped up at once. "What is truth?" jesting Pil- ate Asked, and passed from the question at once with a smile at Its utter futility. Had he addressed it To Ridley MacNab, he at least had confessed it Admitted discussion! and certainly no man Could more promptly have answered the skeptical Roman Than Ridley. Hear some street as- tronomer 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 en- large 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 your 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 ac- cord 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 (exactness Is proportioned forever with painful To the portable nature, the vulgar compactness, The minuteness in size, or the light- ness in weight Of the truth he imparts. So small coins circulate More freely than large ones. A beg- gar 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 off a vestment, The length of the process would limit the act; And therefore the truth that's sum- med up in a tract Is most lightly dispensed. As for Alfred, indeed, On what spoonfuls of truth he was suffered to feed By Sir Ridley, I know not. This only I know, That the two men thus talking con- tinued to go Onward somehow, together,—on into the night,— The midnight,—in which they es- cape 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 be- nignly descended, And the fair morn to all things new sanction extended, In the smile of the East. And the lark soaring on,

Lost in light, shook the dawn with a song from the sun. And the world laughed. It wanted but two rosy hours From the noon, when they passed through the thick passion- flowers Of the little wild garden that dim- pled before The small house where their car- riage now stopped, at Bigorre. And more fair than the flowers, more fresh than the dew, With her white morning robe fitting 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 glad- ness, such grace, And radiant confidence, childlike delight, That his whole heart upbraided it- self at that sight. And he murmured, or sighed, "O, how could I have strayed From this sweet child, or suffered in aught to invade Her young claim on my life, though it were for an hour, The thought of another?" "Look up, my sweet flower!" He whispered her softly, "my heart unto thee Is returned, as returns to the rose the wild bee!" "And will wander no more?" laughed Matilda. "No more" He repeated. And, low to himself, "Yes, 'tis o'er!" My course, too, is decided, Lucile! Was I blind To have dreamed that these clever Frenchwomen of mind Could satisfy simply a plain English heart, Or sympathize with it?"