

XXXII.

The Duke, with a smile,
Turned and entered the Rooms
which, thus talking, mean-
while,
They had reached.

XXXIII.

Alfred Vargrave strode on (over-
thrown
Heart and mind!) in the darkness
bewildered, alone:
"And so," to himself did he mutter,
"and so
'Twas to rescue my life, gentle
spirit! and, oh,
For this did I doubt her? . . . a light
word—a look—
The mistake of a moment! . . . for
this I forsook—
For this? Pardon, pardon, Lucile!
O Lucile!"
Thought and memory rang, like a
funeral peal,
Weary changes on one dirge-like note
through his brain,
As he strayed down the darkness.

XXXIV.

Re-entering again
The Casino, the Duke smiled. He
turned to roulette,
And sat down, and played fast, and
lost largely, and yet
He still smiled: night deepened: he
played his last number:
Went home: and soon slept: and
still smiled in his slumber.

XXXV.

In his desolate Maxims, La Roche-
foucauld wrote,
"In the grief or mischance of a
friend you may note,
There is something which always
gives pleasure."
Alas!
That reflection fell short of the truth
as it was.

La Rochefoucauld might have as
truly set down,—
"No misfortune, but what some one
turns to his own
Advantage its mischief: no sorrow,
but of it [profit:
There ever is somebody ready to
No affliction without its stock-job-
bers, who all
Gamble, speculate, play on the rise
and the fall
Of another man's heart, and make
traffic in it."
Burn thy book, O La Rochefoucauld!
Fool! one man's wit
All men's selfishness how should it
fathom?

O sage,
Dost thou satirize Nature?
She laughs at thy page.

CANTO II.

I.

COUSIN JOHN to COUSIN ALFRED.

"LONDON, 18—.

"MY DEAR ALFRED:
Your last letters put me in pain.
This contempt of existence, this list-
less disdain
Of your own life,—its joys and its
duties,—the deuce
Take my wits if they find for it half
an excuse!
I wish that some Frenchman would
shoot off your leg,
And compel you to stump through
the world on a peg.
I wish that you had, like myself,
(more's the pity!)
To sit seven hours on this cursed
committee.
I wish that you knew, sir, how salt
is the bread
Of another—(what is it that Dante
has said?)
And the trouble of other men's stairs.
In a word,
I wish fate had some real affliction
conferred

On your whimsical self, that, at
least, you had cause
For neglecting life's duties, and
damning its laws!
This pressure against all the pur-
pose of life,
This self-ebullition, and ferment, and
strife,
Betokened, I grant that it may be in
truth,
The richness and strength of the
new wine of youth.
But if, when the wine should have
mellowed with time,
Being bottled and binned, to a flavor
sublime
It retains the same acrid, incongru-
ous taste,
Why, the sooner to throw it away
that we haste
The better, I take it. And this vice
of snarling,
Self-love's little lapdog, the overfed
darling
Of a hypochondriacal fancy appears,
To my thinking, at least, in a man
of your years,
At the midnight of manhood with
plenty to do,
And every incentive for doing it
too,—
With the duties of life just suffi-
ciently pressing
For prayer, and of joys more than
most men for blessing;
With a pretty young wife, and a
pretty full purse,—
Like poltroonery, puerile truly, or
worse!
I wish I could get you at least to
agree
To take life as it is, and consider
with me,
If it be not all smiles, that it is not
all sneers;
It admits honest laughter, and needs
honest tears.
Do you think none have known but
yourself all the pain
Of hopes that retreat, and regrets
that remain?

And all the wide distance fate fixes,
no doubt,
'Twixt the life that's within, and the
life that's without?
What one of us finds the world just
as he likes?
Or gets what he wants when he
wants it? Or strikes
Without missing the thing that he
strikes at the first?
Or walks without stumbling? Or
quenches his thirst
At one draught? Bah! I tell you!
I, bachelor John,
Have had griefs of my own. But
what then? I push on
All the faster perchance that I yet
feel the pain
Of my last fall, albeit I may stumble
again.
God means every man to be happy,
be sure.
He sends us no sorrows that have
not some cure.
Our duty down here is to do, not to
know.
Live as though life were earnest, and
life will be so.
Let each moment, like Time's last
ambassador, come:
It will wait to deliver its message;
and some
Sort of answer it merits. It is not
the deed
A man does, but the way that he
does it, should plead
For the man's compensation in do-
ing it.
"Here,
My next neighbor's a man with
twelve thousand a year,
Who deems that life has not a pas-
time more pleasant
Than to follow a fox or to slaughter
a pheasant.
Yet this fellow goes through a con-
tested election,
Lives in London, and sits, like the
soul of dejection,
All the day through upon a commit-
tee, and late

To the last, every night, through the dreary debate,
 As though he were getting each speaker by heart,
 Though amongst them he never presumes to take part.
 One asks himself why, without murmur or question,
 He foregoes all his tastes, and destroys his digestion,
 For a labor of which the result seems so small.
 'The man is ambitious,' you say. Not at all.
 He has just sense enough to be fully aware
 That he never can hope to be Premier, or share
 The renown of a Tully;—or even to hold
 A subordinate office. He is not so bold
 As to fancy the House for ten minutes would bear
 With patience his modest opinions to hear.
 'But he wants something!'
 "What! with twelve thousand a year?
 What could Government give him would be half so dear
 To his heart as a walk with a dog and a gun
 Through his own pheasant woods, or a capital run?
 'No; but vanity fills out the emptiest brain;
 The man would be more than his neighbors, 'tis plain;
 And the drudgery drearily gone through in town
 Is more than repaid by provincial renown.
 Enough if some Marchioness, lively and loose,
 Shall have eyed him with passing complaisance; the goose,
 If the Fashion to him open one of its doors,
 As proud as a sultan, returns to his boors.'

Wrong again! if you think so.
 "For, *primo*; my friend
 Is the head of a family known from one end
 Of his shire to the other, as the oldest; and therefore
 He despises fine lords and fine ladies.
He care for
 A peerage? no, truly! *Secondo*; he rarely
 Or never goes out: dines at Bellamy's sparely,
 And abhors what you call the gay world.
 "Then, I ask,
 What inspires, and consoles, such a self-imposed task
 As the life of this man,—but the sense of its duty?
 And I swear that the eyes of the haughtiest beauty
 Have never inspired in my soul that intense,
 Reverential, and loving, and absolute sense [man,
 Of heartfelt admiration I feel for this
 As I see him beside me;—there, wearing the wan
 London daylight away, on his humdrum committee;
 So unconscious of all that awakens my pity,
 And wonder—and worship, I might say.
 "To me
 There seems something nobler than genius to be
 In that dull patient labor no genius relieves,
 That absence of all joy which yet never grieves;
 The humility of it! the grandeur withal!
 The sublimity of it! And yet, should you call
 The man's own very slow apprehension to this,
 He would ask, with a stare, what sublimity is!
 His work is the duty to which he was born;

He accepts it, without ostentation or scorn:
 And this man is no uncommon type (I thank Heaven!)
 Of this land's common men. In all other lands, even
 The type's self is wanting. Perchance, 'tis the reason
 That Government oscillates ever 'twixt treason
 And tyranny elsewhere.
 "I wander away
 Too far, though, from what I was wishing to say.
 You, for instance, read Plato. You know that the soul
 Is immortal; and put this in rhyme, on the whole,
 Very well, with sublime illustration. Man's heart
 Is a mystery, doubtless. You trace it in art:—
 The Greek Psyche,—that's beauty,—the perfect ideal.
 But then comes the imperfect, perfectible real,
 With its pained aspiration and strife. In those pale
 Ill-drawn virgins of Giotto you see it prevail.
 You have studied all this. Then, the universe, too,
 Is not a mere house to be lived in, for you. [know
 Geology opens the mind. So you Something also of strata and fossils; these show
 The bases of cosmical structure: some mention
 Of the nebulous theory demands your attention;
 And so on.
 "In short, it is clear the interior
 Of your brain, my dear Alfred, is vastly superior
 In fibre, and fulness, and function, and fire,
 To that of my poor parliamentary squire;
 But your life leaves upon me (forgive me this heat
 Due to friendship) the sense of a thing incomplete.
 You fly high. But what is it, in truth, you fly at?
 My mind is not satisfied quite as to that.
 An old illustration's as good as a new,
 Provided the old illustration be true.
 We are children. Mere kites are the fancies we fly,
 Though we marvel to see them ascending so high;
 Things slight in themselves,—long-tailed toys, and no more.
 What is it that makes the kite steadily soar
 Through the realms where the cloud and the whirlwind have birth
 But the tie that attaches the kite to the earth?
 I remember the lessons of childhood, you see,
 And the hornbook I learned on my poor mother's knee.
 In truth, I suspect little else do we learn
 From this great book of life, which so shrewdly we turn,
 Saving how to apply, with a good or bad grace,
 What we learned in the hornbook of childhood.
 "Your case
 Is exactly in point.
 "Fly your kite, if you please,
 Out of sight: let it go where it will, on the breeze;
 But cut not the one thread by which it is bound,
 Be it never so high, to this poor human ground.
 No man is the absolute lord of his life.
 You, my friend, have a home, and a sweet and dear wife.
 If I often have sighed by my own silent fire,
 With a sense of a sometimes recurring desire

For a voice sweet and low, or a face
fond and fair,
Some dull winter evening to solace
and share
With the love which the world its
good children allows
To shake hands with,—in short, a
legitimate spouse,
This thought has consoled me: "At
least I have given
For my own good behavior no host-
age to heaven."
You have, though. Forget it not!
faith, if you do,
I would rather break stones on a
road than be you.
If any man wilfully injured, or led
That little girl wrong, I would sit on
his head,
Even though you yourself were the
sinner!

"And this
Leads me back (do not take it, dear
cousin, amiss!)
To the matter I meant to have men-
tioned at once,
But these thoughts put it out of my
head for the nonce.
Of all the preposterous humbugs and
shams, lambs,
Of all the old wolves ever taken for
The wolf best received by the flock
he devours
Is that uncle-in-law, my dear Alfred,
of yours.
At least, this has long been my set-
tled conviction,
And I almost would venture at once
the prediction
That before very long—but no mat-
ter! I trust
For his sake and our own, that I
may be unjust.
But Heaven forgive me, if cautious
I am on
The score of such men as, with both
God and Mammon,
Seem so shrewdly familiar.
"Neglect not this warning.
There were rumors afloat in the City
this morning

Which I scarce like the sound of.
Who knows? would he fleece
At a pinch, the old hypocrite, even
his own niece?
For the sake of Matilda I cannot im-
portune
Your attention too early. If all your
wife's fortune
Is yet in the hands of that specious
old sinner,
Who would dice with the devil, and
yet rise up winner,
I say, lose no time! get it out of the
grab
Of her trustee and uncle, Sir Ridley
McNab.
I trust those deposits, at least, are
drawn out,
And safe at this moment from
danger or doubt.
A wink is as good as a nod to the
wise. [justifies
Verbum sap. I admit nothing yet
My mistrust; but I have in my own
mind a notion
That old Ridley's white waistcoat,
and airs of devotion,
Have long been the only ostensible
capital
On which he does business. If so,
time must sap it all,
Sooner or later. Look sharp. Do
not wait,
Draw at once. In a fortnight it may
be too late.
I admit I know nothing. I can but
suspect;
I give you my notions. Form yours
and reflect.
My love to Matilda. Her mother
looks well.
I saw her last week. I have noth-
ing to tell
Worth your hearing. We think that
the Government here
Will not last our next session. Fitz
Funk is a peer,
You will see by the Times. There
are symptoms which show
That the ministers now are prepar-
ing to go,

And finish their feast of the loaves
and the fishes.
It is evident that they are clearing
the dishes,
And cramming their pockets with
bon-bons. Your news
Will be always acceptable. Vere, of
the Blues,
Has bolted with Lady Selina. And
so,
You have met with that hot-headed
Frenchman? I know
That the man is a sad *mauvais sujet*.
Take care
Of Matilda. I wish I could join you
both there;
But, before I am free, you are sure
to be gone.
Good-by my dear fellow. Yours,
anxiously,

"JOHN."

II.

This is just the advice I myself would
have given
To Lord Alfred, had I been his
cousin, which, Heaven
Be praised, I am not. But it reached
him indeed
In an unlucky hour, and received lit-
tle heed.
A half-languid glance was the most
that he lent at
That time to these homilies. *Pri-
mum dementat*
Quem Deus vult perdere. Alfred in
fact
Was behaving just then in a way to
distract
Job's self had Job known him. The
more you'd have thought
The Duke's court to Matilda his eye
would have caught,
The more did his aspect grow listless
to hers,
And the more did it beam to Lucile
de Nevers.
And Matilda, the less she found love
in the look

Of her husband, the less did she
shrink from the Duke.
With each day that passed o'er them,
they each, heart from heart,
Woke to feel themselves further and
further apart.
More and more of his time Alfred
passed at the table;
Played high; and lost more than to
lose he was able.
He grew feverish, querulous, absent,
perverse,—
And here I must mention, what
made matters worse,
That Lucile and the Duke at the self-
same hotel
With the Vargraves resided. It
needs not to tell
That they all saw too much of each
other. The weather
Was so fine that it brought them
each day all together
In the garden, to listen, of course, to
the band.
The house was a sort of phalanstery;
and
Lucile and Matilda were pleased to
discover
A mutual passion for music. More-
over,
The Duke was an excellent tenor:
could sing
"Ange si pure" in a way to bring
down on the wing
All the angels St. Cicely played to.
My lord
Would also at times, when he was
not too bored,
Play Beethoven, and Wagner's new
music, not ill;
With some little things of his own,
showing skill.
For which reason, as well as for some
others too,
Their rooms were a pleasant enough
rendezvous.
Did Lucile, then, encourage (the
heartless coquette!)
All the mischief she could not but
mark?

Patience yet!

III.

In that garden, an arbor, withdrawn
from the sun,
By laburnum and lilac with blooms
overrun,
Formed a vault of cool verdure,
which made, when the heat
Of the noontide hung heavy, a gra-
cious retreat.
And here, with some friends of their
own little world,
In the warm afternoons, till the
shadows uncurled
From the feet of the lindens, and
crept through the grass,
Their blue hours would this gay little
colony pass.
The men loved to smoke, and the
women to bring,
Undeterred by tobacco, their work
there, and sing
Or converse, till the dew fell, and
homeward the bee
Floated, heavy with honey. Towards
eve there was tea
(A luxury due to Matilda), and ice,
Fruit, and coffee. "Ω *Εσπερε, πάντα
φέρεις!*
Such an evening it was, while Ma-
tilda presided
O'er the rustic arrangements thus
daily provided,
With the Duke, and a small German
Prince with a thick head,
And an old Russian Countess both
witty and wicked,
And two Austrian Colonels,—that
Alfred, who yet
Was lounging alone with his last
cigarette,
Saw Lucile de Nevers by herself
pacing slow
'Neath the shade of the cool lindens
trees to and fro,
And joining her, cried, "Thank the
good stars, we meet!
I have so much to say to you!"
"Yes? . . ." with her sweet
Serene voice, she replied to him . . .
"Yes? and I too

Was wishing, indeed, to say some-
what to you."
She was paler just then than her
wont was. The sound
Of her voice had within it a sadness
profound.
"You are ill?" he exclaimed.
"No!" she hurriedly said,
"No no!"
"You alarm me!"
She drooped down her head.
"If your thoughts have of late
sought, or cared, to divine
The purpose of what has been pass-
ing in mine,
My farewell can scarcely alarm you."

ALFRED.

Lucile!

Your farewell! you go!

LUCILE.

Yes, Lord Alfred.

ALFRED.

Reveal

The cause of this sudden unkind-
ness.

LUCILE.

Unkind?

ALFRED.

Yes. what else is this parting?

LUCILE.

No, no! are you blind?

Look into your own heart and home.

Can you see

No reason for this, save unkindness
in me?Look into the eyes of your wife,—
those true eyesToo pure and too honest in aught to
disguiseThe sweet soul shining through
them.

ALFRED.

Lucile! (first and last

Be the word, if you will!) let me
speak of the past.

I know now, alas! though I know it
too late,
What passed at that meeting which
settled my fate.
Nay, nay, interrupt me not yet! let
it be!
I but say what is due to yourself,—
due to me,
And must say it.
He rushed incoherently on,
Describing how, lately, the truth he
had known,
To explain how, and whence, he had
wronged her before,
All the complicate coil wound about
him of yore.
All the hopes that had flown with
the faith that was fled,
"And then, O Lucile, what was left
me," he said,
"When my life was defrauded of
you, but to take
That life, as 'twas left, and endeavor
to make
Unobserved by another, the void
which remained
Unconcealed to myself? If I have
not attained,
I have striven. One word of un-
kindness has never
Passed my lips to Matilda. Her least
wish has ever
Received my submission. And if, of
a truth,
I have failed to renew what I felt in
my youth,
I at least have been loyal to what I
do feel,
Respect, duty, honor, affection. Lu-
cile,
I speak not of love now, nor love's
long regret:
I would not offend you, nor dare I
forget
The ties that are round me. But
may there not be
A friendship yet hallowed between
you and me?
May we not be yet friends,—friends
the dearest?"

"Alas!"

She replied, "for one moment, per-
chance, did it pass
Through my own heart, that dream
which forever hath brought
To those who indulge it in innocent
thought
So fatal and evil a waking! But
no.
For in lives such as ours are, the
Dream-tree would grow
On the borders of Hades: beyond it,
what lies?
The wheel of Ixion, alas! and the
cries
Of the lost and tormented. Depart-
ed, for us,
Are the days when with innocence
we could discuss
Dreams like these. Fled, indeed,
are the dreams of *my* life!
O trust me, the best friend you have
is your wife.
And I,—in that pure child's pure
virtue, I bow
To the beauty of virtue. I felt on
my brow
Not one blush when I first took her
hand. With no blush
Shall I clasp it to-night, when I leave
you.
"Hush! hush!
I would say what I wished to have
said when you came.
Do not think that years leave us and
find us the same!
The woman you knew long ago, long
ago,
Is no more. You yourself have
within you, I know,
The germ of a joy in the years yet
to be,
Whereby the past years will bear
fruit. As for me,
I go my own way,—onward, upward!
"O yet,
Let me thank you for that which en-
nobled regret,
When it came, as it beautified hope
ere it fled,—
The love I once felt for you. True,
it is dead,

But it is not corrupted. I too have
at last
Lived to learn that love is not—
(such love as is past,
Such love as youth dreams of at
least)—the sole part
Of life, which is able to fill up the
heart ;
Even that of a woman.
“Between you and me
Heaven fixes a gulf, over which you
must see
That our guardian angels can bear
us no more.
We each of us stand on an opposite
shore.
Trust a woman’s opinion for once.
Women learn,
By an instinct men never attain, to
discern
Each other’s true natures. Matilda
is fair,
Matilda is young—see her now, sit-
ting there !—
How tenderly fashioned—(O, is she
not ? say.)
To love and be loved !”

IV.

He turned sharply away,—
“Matilda is young, and Matilda is
fair ;
Of all that you tell me pray deem me
aware ;
But Matilda’s a statue, Matilda’s a
child ;
Matilda loves not—”
Lucile quietly smiled
As she answered him :—“Yesterday,
all that you say
Might be true ; it is false, wholly
false, though, to-day.”
“How ?—what mean you ?”
“I mean that to-day,” she re-
plied.
“The statue with life has become
vivified :
I mean that the child to a woman
has grown :
And that woman is jealous.”
“What ! she ?” with a tone

Of ironical wonder, he answered—
“what, she !
She jealous !—Matilda !—of whom,
pray ?—not me !”

“My lord, you deceive yourself ; no
one but you
Is she jealous of. Trust me. And
thank Heaven, too,
That so lately this passion within
her hath grown.
For who shall declare, if for months
she had known
What for days she has known all too
keenly, I fear,
That knowledge perchance might
have cost you more dear ?”
“Explain ! explain, madam !” he
cried in surprise ;
And terror and anger enkindled his
eyes.

“How blind are you men !” she re-
plied. “Can you doubt
That a woman, young, fair, and neg-
lected—”

“Speak out !”
He gasped with emotion. “Lucile !
you mean—what ?
Do you doubt her fidelity ?”
“Certainly not.
Listen to me, my friend. What I
wish to explain
Is so hard to shape forth. I could
almost refrain
From touching a subject so fragile.
However, [endeavor
Bear with me awhile, if I frankly
To invade for one moment your in-
nermost life.
Your honor, Lord Alfred, and that
of your wife,
Are dear to me,—most dear ! And
I am convinced
That you rashly are risking that
honor.”

He winced,
And turned pale, as she spoke.
She had aimed at his heart,
And she saw, by his sudden and ter-
rified start,

That her aim had not missed.
“Stay, Lucile !” he exclaimed,
“What in truth do you mean by
these words, vaguely framed
To alarm me ? Matilda ?—My
wife ?—do you know ?”—
“I know that your wife is as spot-
less as snow.
But I know not how far your con-
tinued neglect
Her nature, as well as her heart,
might affect.
Till at last, by degrees, that serene
atmosphere
Of her unconscious purity, faint and
yet clear,
Like the indistinct golden and vapor-
ous fleece
Which surrounded and hid the cele-
stials in Greece
From the glances of men, would dis-
perse and depart
At the sighs of a sick and delirious
heart,—
For jealousy is to a woman, be sure,
A disease healed too oft by a crimi-
nal cure ;
And the heart left too long to its
ravage, in time
May find weakness in virtue, reprisal
in crime.”

V.

“Such thoughts could have never,”
he faltered, “I know,
Reached the heart of Matilda.”
“Matilda ? O no !
But reflect ! when such thoughts do
not come of themselves
To the heart of a woman neglected,
like elves
That seek lonely places,—there rarely
is wanting
Some voice at her side, with an evil
enchanted
To conjure them to her.”
“O lady, beware !
At this moment, around me I search
everywhere
For a clew to your words”—
“You mistake them,” she said,

Half fearing, indeed, the effect they
had made.
“I was putting a mere hypothetical
case.”

With a long look of trouble he gazed
in her face.

“Woe to him, . . .” he exclaimed
. . . “woe to him that shall feel
Such a hope ! for I swear, if he did
but reveal

One glimpse,—it should be the last
hope of his life !”

The clenched hand and bent eye-
brow betokened the strife
She had roused in his heart.

“You forget,” she began,
“That you menace yourself. You
yourself are the man
That is guilty. Alas ! must it ever
be so ?

Do we stand in our own light, wher-
ever we go,
And fight our own shadows forever ?

O think !

The trial from which you, the
stronger ones, shrink,
You ask woman, the weaker one,
still to endure ;

You bid her be true to the laws you
abjure ;

To abide by the ties you yourselves
rend asunder,

With the force that has failed you ;
and that, too, when under

The assumption of rights which to
her you refuse,

The immunity claimed for your-
selves you abuse !

Where the contract exists, it in-
volves obligation

To both husband and wife, in an
equal relation.

You unloose, in asserting your own
liberty,

A knot, which, unloosed, leaves
another as free,

Then, O Alfred ! be juster at heart !
and thank Heaven
That Heaven to your wife such a
nature has given

That you have not wherewith to reproach her, albeit
You have cause to reproach your own self, could you see it !”

VI.

In the silence that followed the last word she said,
In the heave of his chest, and the droop of his head,
Poor Lucile marked her words had sufficed to impart
A new germ of motion and life to that heart
Of which he himself had so recently spoken
As dead to emotion,—exhausted, or broken !
New fears would awaken new hopes in his life.
In the husband indifferent no more to the wife
She already, as she had foreseen, could discover
That Matilda had gained, at her hands, a new lover.
So after some moments of silence, whose spell
They both felt, she extended her hand to him. . . .

VII.

“ Well ? ”

VIII.

“ Lucile,” he replied, as that soft quiet hand
In his own he clasped warmly, “ I both understand
And obey you.”
“ Thank Heaven ! ” she murmured.
“ O yet,
One word, I beseech you ! I cannot forget.”
He exclaimed, “ we are parting for life. You have shown
My pathway to me : but say, what is your own ? ”
The calmness with which until then she had spoken

In a moment seemed strangely and suddenly broken.
She turned from him nervously, hurriedly.

“ Nay,
I know not,” she murmured, “ I follow the way
Heaven leads me ; I cannot foresee to what end.
I know only that far, far away it must tend
From all places in which we have met, or might meet.
Far away !—onward—upward ! ”
A smile strange and sweet
As the incense that rises from some sacred cup
And mixes with music, stole forth, and breathed up
Her whole face, with those words.
“ Wheresoever it be,
May all gentlest angels attend you ! ”
sighed he,
“ And bear my heart’s blessing wher-ever you are ! ”
And her hand, with emotion, he kissed.

IX.

From afar
That kiss was, alas ! by Matilda beheld
With far other emotions : her young bosom swelled,
And her young cheek with anger was crimsoned.

The Duke
Adroitly attracted towards it her look
By a faint but significant smile.

X.

Much ill-construed,
Renowned Bishop Berkeley has fully, for one, strewed
With arguments page upon page to teach folks [a hoax.
That the world they inhabit is only
But it surely is hard, since we can’t do without them,
That our senses should make us so oft wish to doubt them !

CANTO III.

I.

WHEN first the red savage called
Man strode, a king,
Through the wilds of creation,—the very first thing
That his naked intelligence taught him to feel
Was the shame of himself ; and the wish to conceal
Was the first step in art. From the apron which Eve
In Eden sat down out of fig-leaves to weave,
To the furbelowed flounce and the broad crinoline
Of my lady . . . you all know of course whom I mean . . .
This art of concealment has greatly increased.
A whole world lies cryptic in each human breast ;
And that drama of passions as old as the hills,
Which the moral of all men in each man fulfils,
Is only revealed now and then to our eyes
In the newspaper-files and the courts of assize.

II.

In the group seen so lately in sunlight assembled,
‘Mid those walks over which the labyrinnum-bough trembled,
And the deep-bosomed lilac emparadising
The haunts where the blackbird and thrush flit and sing,
The keenest eye could but have seen, and seen only,
A circle of friends, minded not to leave lonely
The bird on the bough, or the bee on the blossom ;
Conversing, at ease in the garden’s green bosom,
Like those who, when Florence was yet in her glories,

Cheated death and killed time with Boccaccian stories.
But at length the long twilight more deeply grew shaded,
And the fair night the rosy horizon invaded.
And the bee in the blossom, the bird on the bough,
Through the shadowy garden were slumbering now,
The trees only, o’er every unvisited walk, [talk.
Began on a sudden to whisper and And, as each little sprightly and garrulous leaf
Woke up with an evident sense of relief.
They all seemed to be saying . . .
“ Once more we’re alone.
And, thank Heaven, those tiresome people are gone ! ”

III.

Through the deep blue concave of the luminous air,
Large, loving, and languid, the stars here and there,
Like the eyes of shy passionate women, looked down
O’er the dim world whose sole tender light was their own,
When Matilda, alone, from her chamber descended,
And entered the garden, unseen, unattended.
Her forehead was aching and parched, and her breast
By a vague inexpressible sadness oppressed ;
A sadness which led her, she scarcely knew how,
And she scarcely knew why
(save, indeed, that just now
The house, out of which with a gasp she had fled
Half-stifled, seemed ready to sink on her head) . . .
Out into the night air, the silence, the bright
Boundless starlight, the cool isolation of night !