

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 !

Her husband that day had looked
once in her face,
And pressed both her hands in a
silent embrace,
And reproachfully noticed her re-
cent dejection
With a smile of kind wonder and
tacit affection.
He, of late so indifferent and listless !
. . . at last
Was he startled and awed by the
change which had passed
O'er the once radiant face of his
young wife ? Whence came
That long look of solicitous fond-
ness ? . . . the same
Look and language of quiet affection,
—the look
And the language, alas ! which so
often she took
For pure love in the simple repose
of its purity,—
Her own heart thus lulled to a fatal
security !
Ha ! would he deceive her again by
this kindness ?
Had she been, then, O fool ! in her
innocent blindness
The sport of transparent illusion ?
ah, folly !
And that feeling, so tranquil, so hap-
py, so holy,
She had taken, till then, in the
heart, not alone
Of her husband, but also, indeed, in
her own,
For true love, nothing else, after all,
did it prove
But a friendship profanely familiar ?
“ And love ? . . .
What was love, then ? . . . not calm,
not secure,—scarcely kind !
But in one, all intensest emotions
combined :
Life and death : pain and rapture.”
Thus wandering astray,
Led by doubt, through the darkness
she wandered away.
All silently crossing, recrossing the
night,
With faint, meteoric, miraculous

The swift-shooting stars through the
infinite burned,
And into the infinite ever returned.
And silently o'er the obscure and
unknown
In the heart of Matilda there darted
and shone
Thoughts, enkindling like meteors
the deeps, to expire,
Leaving traces behind them of
tremulous fire.

IV.

She entered that arbor of lilacs, in
which
The dark air with odors hung heavy
and rich,
Like a soul that grows faint with
desire.

’Twas the place
In which she so lately had sat, face
to face
With her husband,—and her, the
pale stranger detested,
Whose presence her heart like a
plague had infested.
The whole spot with evil remem-
brance was haunted.
Through the darkness there rose on
the heart which it daunted
Each dreary detail of that desolate
day,
So full, and yet so incomplete. Far
away
The acacias were muttering, like
mischievous elves,
The whole story over again to them-
selves,
Each word,—and each word was a
wound ! By degrees
Her memory mingled its voice with
the trees.

V.

Like the whisper Eve heard, when
she paused by the root
Of the sad tree of knowledge, and
gazed on its fruit,
To the heart of Matilda the trees
seemed to hiss
Wild instructions, revealing man’s
last right, which is

The right of reprisals.
An image uncertain,
And vague, dimly shaped itself forth
on the curtain
Of the darkness around her. It
came, and it went ;
Through her senses a faint sense of
peril it sent :
It passed and repassed her ; it went
and it came
Forever returning ; forever the same ;
And forever more clearly defined ;
till her eyes
In that outline obscure could at last
recognize
The man to whose image, the more
and the more
That her heart, now aroused from
its calm sleep of yore,
From her husband detached itself
slowly, with pain,
Her thoughts had returned, and re-
turned to, again, [law,—
As though by some secret indefinite
The vigilant Frenchman, — Eugène
de Luvois !

VI.

A light sound behind her. She
trembled. By some
Night-witchcraft her vision a fact
had become.
On a sudden she felt, without turn-
ing to view,
That a man was approaching behind
her. She knew
By the fluttering pulse which she
could not restrain,
And the quick-beating heart, that
this man was Eugène.
Her first instinct was flight ; but she
felt her slight foot
As heavy as though to the soil it had
root.

And the Duke’s voice retained her,
like fear in a dream.

VII.

“ Ah, lady ! in life there are meet-
ings which seem
Like a fate. Dare I think like a
sympathy too ?

Yet what else can I bless for this
vision of you ?
Alone with my thoughts, on this
starlighted lawn,
By an instinct resistless, I felt my-
self drawn
To revisit the memories left in the
place
Where so lately this evening I look-
ed in your face.
And I find,—you, yourself,—my own
dream !

“ Can there be
In this world one thought common
to you and to me ?
If so, . . . I, who deemed but a mo-
ment ago
My heart unaccompanied, save only
by woe,
Should indeed be more blessed than
I dare to believe—
Ah, but *one* word, but one from your
lips to receive” . . .

Interrupting him quickly, she mur-
mured, “ I sought,
Here, a moment of solitude, silence,
and thought,
Which I needed.” . . .
“ Lives solitude only for one ?
Must its charm by my presence so
soon be undone ?
Ah, cannot two share it ? What
needs it for this ?—
The same thought in both hearts,—
be it sorrow or bliss ;
If my heart be the reflex of yours,
lady,—you,
Are you not yet alone,—even though
we be two ?”

“ For that,” . . . said Matilda, . . .
“ needs were, you should read
What I have in my heart.” . . .
“ Think you, lady, indeed,
You are yet of that age when a wo-
man conceals
In her heart so completely whatever
she feels
From the heart of the man whom it
interests to know

And find out what that feeling may be? Ah, not so, Lady Alfred! Forgive me that in it I look, But I read in your heart as I read in a book."

"Well, Duke! and what read you within it? unless It be, of a truth, a profound weariness, And some sadness?"

"No doubt. To all facts there are laws. The effect has its cause, and I mount to the cause."

VIII.

Matilda shrank back; for she suddenly found That a finger was pressed on the yet bleeding wound She herself had but that day perceived in her breast.

"You are sad," . . . said the Duke (and that finger yet pressed With a cruel persistence the wound it made bleed)—

"You are sad, Lady Alfred, because the first need Of a young and a beautiful woman is to be

Beloved, and to love. You are sad; for you see

That you are not beloved, as you deemed that you were:

You are sad: for that knowledge hath left you aware

That you have not yet loved, though you thought that you had.

Yes, yes! . . . you are sad—because knowledge is sad!"

He could not have read more profoundly her heart.

"What gave you," she cried, with a terrified start,

"Such strange power?" . . .

"To read in your thoughts?" he exclaimed,

"O lady,—a love, deep, profound,—be it blamed

Or rejected,—a love, true, intense,—such, at least, As you, and you only, could wake in my breast!"

"Hush, hush! . . . I beseech you . . . for pity!" she gasped, Snatching hurriedly from him the hand he had clasped In her effort instinctive to fly from the spot.

"For pity?" . . . he echoed, "for pity! and what Is the pity you owe him? his pity for you!

He, the lord of a life, fresh as new-fallen dew!

The guardian and guide of a woman, young, fair,

And matchless! (whose happiness did he not swear

To cherish through life?) he neglects her—for whom?

For a fairer than she? No! the rose in the bloom

Of that beauty which, even when hidden, can prevail

To keep sleepless with song the aroused nightingale,

Is not fairer; for even in the pure world of flowers

Her symbol is not, and this poor world of ours

Has no second Matilda! For whom? Let that pass!

'Tis not I, 'tis not you, that can name her, alas!

And I dare not question or judge her. But why,

Why cherish the cause of your own misery?

Why think of one, lady, who thinks not of you?

Why be bound by a chain which himself he breaks through?

And why, since you have but to stretch forth your hand,

The love which you need and deserve to command,

Why shrink? Why repel it?"

"O hush, sir! O hush!" Cried Matilda, as though her whole heart were one blush. "Cease, cease, I conjure you, to trouble my life! Is not Alfred your friend? and am I not his wife?"

IX.

"And have I not, lady," he answered, . . . "respected His rights as a friend, till himself he neglected Your rights as a wife? Do you think 'tis alone

For three days I have loved you? My love may have grown

I admit, day by day, since I first felt your eyes,

In watching their tears, and in sounding your sighs.

But, O lady! I loved you before I believed

That your eyes ever wept, or your heart ever grieved.

Then I deemed you were happy—I deemed you possessed

All the love you deserved,—and I hid in my breast

My own love, till this hour—when I could not but feel

Your grief gave me the right my own grief to reveal!

I knew, years ago, of the singular power

Which Lucile o'er your husband possessed. Till the hour

In which he revealed it himself, did I,—say!—

By a word, or a look, such a secret betray?

No! no! do me justice. I never have spoken

Of this poor heart of mine, till all ties he had broken

Which bound *your* heart to him. And now—now, that his love

For another hath left your own heart free to rove,

What is it,—even now,—that I kneel to implore you?

Only this, Lady Alfred! . . . to let me adore you

Unblamed: to have confidence in me: to spend

On me not one thought, save to think me your friend.

Let me speak to you,—ah, let me speak to you still!

Hush to silence my words in your heart, if you will.

I ask no response: I ask only your leave

To live yet in your life, and to grieve when you grieve!"

X.

"Leave me, leave me!" . . . she gasped, with a voice thick and low

From emotion. "For pity's sake, Duke, let me go!

I feel that to blame we should both of us be,

Did I linger?"

"To blame? yes, no doubt!" . . . answered he,

"If the love of your husband, in bringing you peace,

Had forbidden you hope. But he signs your release

By the hand of another. One moment! but one!

Who knows when, alas! I may see you alone

As to-night I have seen you! or when we may meet

As to-night we have met? when, entranced at your feet,

As in this blessed hour, I may ever avow

The thoughts which are pining for utterance now!"

"Duke! Duke!" . . . she exclaimed . . . "for heaven's sake let me go!

It is late. In the house they will miss me, I know.

We must not be seen here together. The night

Is advancing. I feel overwhelmed with affright!

It is time to return to my lord."
 "To your lord?"
 He repeated, with lingering reproach
 on the word,
 "To your lord? do you think he
 awaits you, in truth?
 Is he anxiously missing your pres-
 ence, forsooth?
 Return to your lord! . . . his restraint
 to renew?
 And hinder the glances which are
 not for you?
 No, no! . . . at this moment his
 looks seek the face
 Of another! another is there in your
 place!
 Another consoles him! another re-
 ceives
 The soft speech which from silence
 your absence relieves!"

XI.

"You mistake, sir!" . . . responded
 a voice, calm, severe,
 And sad, . . . "You mistake, sir!
 that other is here."
 Eugène and Matilda both started.
 "Lucile!"
 With a half-stifled scream, as she felt
 herself reel
 From the place where she stood,
 cried Matilda.

"Ho, oh!

What! eaves-dropping, madam?"
 . . . the Duke cried . . . "And
 so
 You were listening?"
 "Say, rather," she said, "that I
 heard,
 Without wishing to hear it, that in-
 famous word,—
 Heard—and therefore reply."
 "Belle Comtesse," said the Duke,
 With concentrated wrath in the sav-
 age rebuke,
 Which betrayed that he felt himself
 baffled . . . "you know
 That your place is not here."
 "Duke," she answered him slow,
 "My place is wherever my duty is
 clear,

And therefore my place, at this mo-
 ment, is here.
 O lady, this morning my place was
 beside
 Your husband, because (as she said
 this she sighed)
 I felt that from folly fast growing
 to crime—
 The crime of self-blindness—Heaven
 yet spared me time
 To save for the love of an innocent
 wife
 All that such love deserved in the
 heart and the life
 Of the man to whose heart and whose
 life you alone
 Can with safety confide the pure
 trust of your own."

She turned to Matilda, and lightly
 laid on her
 Her soft, quiet hand . . .
 "'Tis, O lady, the honor
 Which that man has confided to you,
 that, in spite
 Of his friend, I now trust I may yet
 save to-night—
 Save for both of you, lady! for yours
 I revere;
 Duc de Luvois, what say you?—my
 place is not here?"

XII.

And, so saying, the hand of Matilda
 she caught,
 Wound one arm round her waist un-
 resisted, and sought
 Gently, softly, to draw her away
 from the spot.
 The Duke stood confounded, and
 followed them not.
 But not yet the house had they
 reached when Lucile
 Her tender and delicate burden could
 feel
 Sink and falter beside her. O, then
 she knelt down,
 Flung her arms round Matilda, and
 pressed to her own
 The poor bosom beating against her.

The moon,
 Bright, breathless, and buoyant, and
 brimful of June,
 Floated up from the hillside, sloped
 over the vale,
 And poised herself loose in mid-
 heaven, with one pale,
 Minute, scintilless, and tremu-
 lous star
 Swinging under her globe like a
 wizard-lit car,
 Thus to each of those women reveal-
 ing the face
 Of the other. Each bore on her
 features the trace
 Of a vivid emotion. A deep inward
 shame
 The cheek of Matilda had flooded
 with flame.
 With her enthusiastic emotion, Lu-
 cile
 Trembled visibly yet; for she could
 not but feel
 That a heavenly hand was upon her
 that night,
 And it touched her pure brow to a
 heavenly light.
 "In the name of your husband, dear
 lady," she said;
 "In the name of your mother, take
 heart! Lift your head,
 For those blushes are noble. Alas!
 do not trust
 To that maxim of virtue made ashes
 and dust,
 That the fault of the husband can
 cancel the wife's.
 Take heart! and take refuge and
 strength in your life's
 Pure silence,—there, kneel, pray,
 and hope, weep, and wait!"
 "Saved, Lucile!" sobbed Matilda,
 "but saved to what fate?"
 Tears, prayers, yes! not hopes."
 "Hush!" the sweet voice replied.
 "Fooled away by a fancy, again to
 your side
 Must your husband return. Doubt
 not this. And return
 For the love you can give, with the
 love that you yearn

To receive, lady. What was it chilled
 you both now?
 Not the absence of love, but the ig-
 norance how
 Love is nourished by love. Well!
 henceforth you will prove
 Your heart worthy of love,—since it
 knows how to love."

XIII.

"What gives you such power over
 me, that I feel
 Thus drawn to obey you? What are
 you, Lucile?"
 Sighed Matilda, and lifted her eyes
 to the face
 Of Lucile.
 There passed suddenly through it
 the trace
 Of deep sadness; and o'er that fair
 forehead came down
 A shadow which yet was too sweet
 for a frown.
 "The pupil of sorrow, perchance"
 . . . she replied.
 "Of sorrow?" Matilda exclaimed
 . . . "O confide
 To my heart your affliction. In all
 you made known
 I should find some instruction, no
 doubt, for my own!"
 "And I some consolation, no doubt,
 for the tears
 Of another have not flowed for me
 many years."

It was then that Matilda herself
 seized the hand
 Of Lucile in her own, and uplifted
 her; and
 Thus together they entered the house

XIV.

'Twas the room
 Of Matilda.
 The languid and delicate gloom
 Of a lamp of pure white alabaster,
 aloft
 From the ceiling suspended, around
 it slept soft.

The casement oped into the garden.
The pale
Cool moonlight streamed through it.
One lone nightingale
Sung aloof in the laurels.
And here, side by side,
Hand in hand, the two women sat
down undescried,
Save by guardian angels.
As, when, sparkling yet
From the rain, that, with drops that
are jewels, leaves wet
The bright head it humbles, a young
rose inclines
To some pale lily near it, the fair
vision shines
As one flower with two faces, in
hushed, tearful speech,
Like the showery whispers of flow-
ers, each to each
Lunked, and leaning together, so lov-
ing, so fair,
So united, yet diverse, the two wo-
men there
Looked, indeed, like two flowers
upon one drooping stem,
In the soft light that tenderly rested
on them.
All that soul said to soul in that
chamber, who knows?
All that heart gained from heart?
Leave the lily, the rose,
Undisturbed with their secret within
them. For who
To the heart of the floweret can fol-
low the dew?
A night full of stars! O'er the si-
lence, unseen,
The footsteps of sentinel angels, be-
tween
The dark land and deep sky were
moving. You heard
Passed from earth up to heaven the
happy watchword
Which brightened the stars as
amongst them it fell
From earth's heart, which it eased
... "All is well! all is well!"

CANTO IV.

I.

THE Poets pour wine; and, when
'tis new, all decry it,
But, once let it be old, every trifler
must try it.
And Polonius, who praises no wine
that's not Massic,
Complains of my verse, that my verse
is not classic.
And Miss Tilburina, who sings, and
not badly,
My earlier verses, sighs "Common-
place sadly!"

As for you, O Polonius, you vex me
but slightly;
But you, Tilburina, your eyes beam
so brightly
In despite of their languishing looks,
on my word,
That to see you look cross I can
scarcely afford.
Yes! the silliest woman that smiles
on a bard
Better far than Longinus himself
can reward
The appeal to her feelings of which
she approves;
And the critics I most care to please
are the Loves.

Alas, friend! what boots it, a stone
at his head
And a brass on his breast,—when a
man is once dead?
Ay! were fame the sole guerdon,
poor guerdon were then
Theirs who, stripping life bare, stand
forth models for men.
The reformer's?—a creed by poster-
ity learnt
A century after its author is burnt!
The poet's?—a laurel that hides the
bald brow
It hath blighted! The painter's?—
ask Raphael now
Which Madonna's authentic! The
statesman's?—a name
For parties to blacken, or boys to de-
claim!

The soldier's?—three lines on the
cold Abbey pavement!
Were this all the life of the wise and
the brave meant,
All it ends in, thrice better, Næra,
it were
Unregarded to sport with thine odor-
ous hair,
Untroubled to lie at thy feet in the
shade
And be loved, while the roses yet
bloom overhead,
Than to sit by the lone hearth, and
think the long thought,
A severe, sad, blind schoolmaster,
envied for naught
Save the name of John Milton! For
all men, indeed,
Who in some choice edition may
graciously read,
With fair illustration, and erudite
note,
The song which the poet in bitter-
ness wrote,
Beat the poet, and notably beat him,
in this—
The joy of the genius is theirs, whilst
they miss
The grief of the man: Tasso's song,
—not his madness!
Dante's dreams,—not his waking to
exile and sadness!
Milton's music,—but not Milton's
blindness! . . .

Yet rise,
My Milton, and answer, with those
noble eyes
Which the glory of heaven hath
blinded to earth!
Say—the life, in the living it, savors
of worth:
That the deed, in the doing it,
reaches its aim:
That the fact has a value apart from
the fame:
That a deeper delight, in the mere
labor, pays
Scorn of lesser delights, and labori-
ous days:
And Shakespeare, though all Shake-
speare's writings were lost,

And his genius, though never a trace
of it crossed
Posterity's path, not the less would
have dwelt
In the isle with Miranda, with Ham-
let have felt
All that Hamlet hath uttered, and
haply where, pure
On its death-bed, wronged Love lay,
have moaned with the Moor!

II.

When Lord Alfred that night to the
salon returned
He found it deserted. The lamp
dimly burned
As though half out of humor to find
itself there
Forced to light for no purpose a room
that was bare.
He sat down by the window alone.
Never yet
Did the heavens a lovelier evening
beget
Since Latona's bright childbed that
bore the new moon!
The dark world lay still, in a sort of
sweet swoon,
Wide open to heaven; and the stars
on the stream
Were trembling like eyes that are
loved on the dream
Of a lover; and all things were glad
and at rest
Save the unquiet heart in his own
troubled breast.
He endeavored to think,—an un-
wonted employment,
Which appeared to afford him no
sort of enjoyment.

III.

"Withdraw into yourself. But, if
peace you seek there for,
Your reception, beforehand, be sure
to prepare for,"
Wrote the tutor of Nero; who wrote,
be it said,
Better far than he acted,—but peace
to the dead!