

When the soul arms for battle, she goes forth alone.  
I say not, indeed, we shall meet nevermore,  
For I know not. But meet, as we have met of yore,  
I know that we cannot. Perchance we may meet  
By the death-bed, the tomb, in the crowd, in the street,  
Or in solitude even, but never again shall we meet from henceforth as we have met, Eugène.  
For we know not the way we are going, nor yet  
Where our two ways may meet, or may cross. Life hath set  
No landmarks before us. But this, this alone,  
I will promise : whatever your path, or my own,  
If, for once in the conflict before you, it chance  
That the Dragon prevail, and with cleft shield, and lance  
Lost or shattered, borne down by the stress of the war,  
You falter and hesitate, if from afar I, still watching (unknown to yourself, it may be)  
O'er the conflict to which I conjure you, should see  
That my presence could rescue, support you, or guide,  
In the hour of that need I shall be at your side,  
To warn, if you will, or incite, or control ;  
And again, once again, we shall meet, soul to soul !”

## XIV.

The voice ceased.  
He uplifted his eyes.  
All alone  
He stood on the bare edge of dawn.  
She was gone.  
Like a star, when up bay after bay of the night,  
Ripples in, wave on wave, the broad ocean of light.

And at once, in her place, was the Sunrise ! It rose  
In its sumptuous splendor and solemn repose,  
The supreme revelation of light. Domes of gold,  
Realms of rose, in the Orient ! And breathless, and bold,  
While the great gates of heaven rolled back one by one,  
The bright herald angel stood stern in the sun !  
Thrice holy Eospheros ! Light's reign began  
In the heaven, on the earth, in the heart of the man.  
The dawn on the mountains ! the dawn everywhere !  
Light ! silence ! the fresh innovations of air !  
O earth, and O ether ! A butterfly breeze  
Floated up, fluttered down, and poised blithe on the trees.  
Through the revelling woods, o'er the sharp-rippled stream,  
Up the vale slow uncoiling itself out of dream,  
Around the brown meadows, adown the hill-slope,  
The spirits of morning were whispering, “*Hope !*”

## XV.

He uplifted his eyes. In the place where she stood  
But a moment before, and where now rolled the flood  
Of the sunrise all golden, he seemed to behold,  
In the young light of sunrise, an image unfold  
Of his own youth,—its ardors,—its promise of fame,—  
Its ancestral ambition ; and France by the name  
Of his sires seemed to call him  
There, hovered in light,  
That image aloft, o'er the shapeless and bright

And Aurean clouds, which themselves seemed to be  
Brilliant fragments of that golden world, wherein he  
Had once dwelt, a native !  
There, rooted and bound  
To the earth, stood the man, gazing at it ! Around  
The rims of the sunrise it hovered and shone  
Transcendent, that type of a youth that was gone ;  
And he,—as the body may yearn for the soul,  
So he yearned to embody that image.  
His whole  
Heart arose to regain it.  
“*And is it too late ?*”  
No ! For time is a fiction, and limits not fate.  
Thought alone is eternal. Time thralls it in vain.  
For the thought that springs upward and yearns to regain  
The pure source of spirit, there is no  
TOO LATE.  
As the stream to its first mountain levels, elate  
In the fountain arises, the spirit in him  
Arose to that image. The image waned dim  
Into heaven ; and heavenward with it, to melt  
As it melted, in day's broad expansion, he felt  
With a thrill, sweet and strange, and intense,—awed, amazed,—  
Something soar and ascend in his soul, as he gazed.

## CANTO VI.

## I.

MAN is born on a battle-field. Round him, to rend  
Or resist, the dread Powers he displaces attend,  
By the cradle which Nature, amidst the stern shocks

That have shattered creation, and shapen it, rocks.  
He leaps with a wail into being ; and lo !  
His own mother, fierce Nature herself, is his foe.  
Her whirlwinds are roused into wrath o'er his head :  
'Neath his feet roll her earthquakes : her solitudes spread  
To daunt him : her forces dispute his command :  
Her snows fall to freeze him : her suns burn to brand :  
Her seas yawn to engulf him : her rocks rise to crush :  
And the lion and leopard, allied, lurk to rush  
On their startled invader.  
In lone Malabar,  
Where the infinite forest spreads breathless and far,  
'Mid the cruel of eye and the stealthy of claw  
(Striped and spotted destroyers ! ) he sees, pale with awe,  
On the menacing edge of a fiery sky  
Grim Doorga, blue-limbed and red-handed, go by, [Terror.  
And the first thing he worships is Anon,  
Still impelled by necessity hungrily on,  
He conquers the realms of his own self-reliance,  
And the last cry of fear wakes the first of defiance.  
From the serpent he crushes its poisonous soul :  
Smitten down in his path see the dead lion roll !  
On toward Heaven the son of Almena strides high on  
The heads of the Hydra, the spoils of the lion :  
And man, conquering Terror, is worshipped by man.  
A camp has this world been since first it began !  
From his tents sweeps the roving Arabian ; at peace,



A mere wandering shepherd that follows the fleece ;  
But, warring his way through a world's destinies,  
Lo, from Delhi, from Bagdadt, from Cordova, rise  
Domes of empyr, dowered with science and art,  
Schools, libraries, forums, the palace, the mart !

New realms to man's soul have been conquered. But those,  
Forthwith they are peopled for man by new foes !

The stars keep their secrets, the earth hides her own,  
And bold must the man be that braves the Unknown !

Not a truth has to art or to science been given,

But brows have ached for it, and souls toiled and striven ;  
And many have striven, and many have failed,

And many died, slain by the truth they assailed.

But when Man hath tamed Nature, asserted his place

And dominion, behold ! he is brought face to face

With a new foe,—himself !

Nor may man on his shield ever rest, for his foe is forever afield,  
Danger ever at hand, till the arméd Archangel

Sound o'er him the trump of earth's final evangel.

## II.

Silence straightway, stern Muse, the soft cymbals of pleasure,  
Be all bronzen these numbers, and martial the measure !

Breathe, sonorously breathe, o'er the spirit in me

One strain, sad and stern, of that deep Epopée

Which thou, from the fashionless cloud of far time,

Chantest lonely, when Victory, pale, and sublime

In the light of the aureole over her head,

Hears, and heeds not the wound in her heart fresh and red.

Blown wide by the blare of the clarion, unfold

The shrill clanging curtains of war !  
And behold

A vision !

The antique Heracleian seats ;  
And the long Black Sea billow that once bore those fleets,

Which said to the winds, "Be ye, too, Genoese !"

And the red angry sands of the chafed Chersonese ;

And the two foes of man, War and Winter, allied

Round the Armies of England and France, side by side

Enduring and dying (Gaul and Briton abreast !)

Where the towers of the North fret the skies of the East.

## III.

Since that sunrise, which rose through the calm linden stems

O'er Lucile and Eugène, in the garden at Ems,

Through twenty-five seasons encircling the sun,

This planet of ours on its pathway hath gone,

And the fates that I sing of have flowed with the fates

Of a world, in the red wake of war, round the gates

Of that doomed and heroical city, in which

(Fire crowning the rampart, blood bathing the ditch !)

At bay, fights the Russian as some hunted bear,

Whom the huntsmen have hemmed round at last in his lair.

## IV.

A fanged, arid plain, sapped with underground fire,

Soaked with snow, torn with shot, mashed to one gory mire !

There Fate's iron scale hangs in horrid suspense,

While those two famished ogres,—the Siege, the Defence,

Face to face, through a vapor froze, dismal, and dun,

Glare, scenting the breath of each other.

The one

Double-bodied, two-headed,—by separate ways

Winding, serpent-wise, nearer ; the other, each day's

Sullen toil adding size to,—concentrated, solid,

Indefatigable,—the brass-fronted, embodied,

And audible *avros* gone sombrely forth To the world from that Autocrat

Will of the north !

## V.

In the dawn of a moody October, a pale

Ghostly motionless vapor began to prevail

Over city and camp ; like the garment of death

Which (is formed by) the face it conceals.

'Twas the breath

War, yet drowsily yawning, began to suspire ;

Wherethrough, here and there, flashed an eye of red fire,

And closed, from some rampart beginning to bellow

Hoarse challenge ; replied to anon, through the yellow

And sulphurous twilight : till day reeled and rocked,

And roared into dark. Then the midnight was mocked

With fierce apparitions. Ringed round by a rain

Of red fire, and of iron, the murderous plain

Flared with fitful combustion ; where fitfully fell

Afar off the fatal, disgorged *scharpenelle*,

And fired the horizon, and singed the coiled gloom

With wings of swift flame round that City of Doom.

## VI.

So the day—so the night ! So by night, so by day,

With stern patient patlios, while time wears away,

In the trench flooded through, in the wind where it wails,

In the snow where it falls, in the fire where it hails

Shot and shell—link by link, out of hardship and pain,

Toil, sickness, endurance, is forged the bronze chain

Of those terrible siege-lines !

No change to that toil Save the mine's sudden leap from the treacherous soil,

Save the midnight attack, save the groans of the maimed,

And Death's daily obolus due, whether claimed

By man or by nature.

## VII.

Time passes. The dumb, Bitter, snow-bound, and sullen November is come.

And its snows have been bathed in the blood of the brave :

And many a young heart has glutted the grave :

And on Inkerman yet the wild bramble is gory,

And those bleak heights henceforth shall be famous in story.

## VIII.

The moon, swathed in storm, has long set : through the camp

No sound save the sentinel's slow sullen tramp,

The distant explosion, the wild sleety wind,

That seems searching for something it never can find.

The midnight is turning : the lamp is nigh spent ;



And, wounded and lone, in a desolate tent  
Lies a young British soldier whose sword . . .  
In this place,  
However, my Muse is compelled to retrace  
Her precipitous steps and revert to the past.  
The shock which had suddenly shattered at last  
Alfred Vargrave's fantastical holiday nature,  
Had sharply drawn forth to his full size and stature  
The real man, concealed till that moment beneath  
All he yet had appeared. From the gay brodered sheath  
Which a man in his wrath flings aside, even so  
Leaps the keen trenchant steel summoned forth by a blow.  
And thus loss of fortune gave value to life.  
The wife gained a husband, the husband a wife,  
In that home which, though humbled and narrowed by fate,  
Was enlarged and ennobled by love.  
Low their state,  
But large their possessions.  
Sir Ridley, forgiven  
By those he unwittingly brought nearer heaven  
By one fraudulent act, than through all his sleek speech  
The hypocrite brought his own soul, safe from reach  
Of the law, died abroad.  
Cousin John, heart and hand,  
Purse and person, henceforth (honest man !) took his stand  
By Matilda and Alfred ; guest, guardian, and friend  
Of the home he both shared and assured, to the end,  
With his large lively love. Alfred Vargrave meanwhile  
Faced the world's frown, consoled by his wife's faithful smile.

Late in life he began life in earnest ;  
and still,  
With the tranquil exertion of resolute will,  
Through long, and laborious, and difficult days,  
Out of manifold failure, by wearisome ways,  
Worked his way through the world ; till at last he began  
(Reconciled to the work which mankind claims from man),  
After years of unwitnessed, unwaried endeavor,  
Years impassioned yet patient, to realize ever  
More clear on the broad stream of current opinion  
The reflex of powers in himself,—that dominion  
Which the life of one man, if his life be a truth,  
May assert o'er the life of mankind.  
Thus, his youth  
In his manhood renewed, fame and fortune he won  
Working only for home, love, and duty.

One son  
Matilda had borne him ; but scarce had the boy,  
With all Eton yet fresh in his full heart's frank joy,  
The darling of young soldier comrades, just glanced  
Down the glad dawn of manhood at life, when it chanced  
That a blight sharp and sudden was breathed o'er the bloom  
Of his joyous and generous years, and the gloom  
Of a grief premature on their fair promise fell :  
No light cloud like those which, for June to dispel,  
Captious April engenders ; but deep as his own  
Deep nature. Meanwhile, ere I fully make known  
The cause of this sorrow, I track the event.

When first a wild war-note through England was sent,  
He, transferring without either token or word,  
To friend, parent, or comrade, a yet virgin sword,  
From a holiday troop, to one bound for the war,  
Had marched forth, with eyes that saw death in the star  
Whence others sought glory. Thus, fighting, he fell  
On the red field of Inkerman ; found, who can tell  
By what miracle, breathing, though shattered, and borne  
To the rear by his comrades, pierced, bleeding, and torn.  
Where for long days and nights, with the wound in his side,  
He lay, dark.

## IX.

But a wound deeper far, undescribed,  
In the young heart was rankling ; for there, of a truth,  
In the first earnest faith of a pure pensive youth,  
A love large as life, deep and changeless as death,  
Lay ensheathed : and that love, ever fretting its sheath,  
The frail scabbard of life pierced and wore through and through.  
There are loves in man's life for which time can renew  
All that time may destroy. Lives there are, though, in love,  
Which cling to one faith, and die with it ; nor move,  
Though earthquakes may shatter the shrine.

Whence or how  
Love laid claim to this young life, it matters not now.

## X.

O, is it a phantom ? a dream of the night ?  
A vision which fever hath fashioned to sight ?

The wind wailing ever, with motion uncertain,  
Sways sighingly there the drenched tent's tattered curtain,  
To and fro, up and down.

But it is not the wind  
That is lifting it now : and it is not the mind

That hath moulded that vision.  
A pale woman enters,  
As wan as the lamp's waning light,  
which concentrates  
Its dull glare upon her. With eyes dim and dimmer

There, all in a slumberous and shadowy glimmer,  
The sufferer sees that still form floating on,

And feels faintly aware that he is not alone.

She is flitting before him. She pauses. She enters.  
By his bedside, all silent. She lays her white hands

On the brow of the boy. A light finger is pressing

Softly, softly the sore wounds : the hot blood-stained dressing  
Slips from them. A comforting quietude steals

Through the racked weary frame : and, throughout it, he feels

The slow sense of a merciful, mild neighborhood.

Something smooths the tossed pillow.  
Beneath a gray hood

Of rough serge, two intense tender eyes are bent o'er him,

And thrill through and through him.  
The sweet form before him,

It is surely Death's angel Life's last vigil keeping !

A soft voice says . . . " Sleep !"  
And he sleeps : he is sleeping.

## XI.

He waked before dawn. Still the vision is there :

Still that pale woman moves not. A ministering care



Meanwhile has been silently changing and cheering  
The aspect of all things around him.  
Revering  
Some power unknown and benignant, he blessed  
In silence the sense of salvation.  
And rest  
Having loosened the mind's tangled meshes, he faintly  
Sighed . . . "Say what thou art, blessed dream of a saintly  
And ministering spirit!"  
A whisper serene  
Slid, softer than silence . . . "The Sœur Seraphine,  
A poor Sister of Charity. Shun to inquire  
Aught further, young soldier. The son of thy sire,  
For the sake of that sire, I reclaim from the grave.  
Thou didst not shun death: shun not life. 'Tis more brave  
To live, than to die. Sleep!"  
He sleeps: he is sleeping.

## XII.

He wakened again, when the dawn was just steeping  
The skies with chill splendor. And there, never flitting,  
Never flitting, that vision of mercy was sitting.  
As the dawn to the darkness, so life seemed returning  
Slowly, feebly within him. The night-lamp, yet burning,  
Made ghastly the glimmering day-break.  
He said,  
"If thou be of the living, and not of the dead,  
Sweet minister, pour out yet further the healing [revealing  
Of that balmy voice; if it may be, Thy mission of mercy! whence art thou?"  
"O son  
Of Matilda and Alfred, it matters not! One

Who is not of the living nor yet of the dead:  
To thee, and to others, alive yet"  
. . . she said . . .  
"So long as there liveth the poor gift in me to thee,  
Of this ministration; to them, and Dead in all things beside. A French Nun, whose vocation  
Is now by this bedside. A nun hath no nation.  
Wherever man suffers or woman may soothe,  
There her land! there her kindred!"  
She bent down to smooth  
The hot pillow; and added . . .  
"Yet more than another  
Is thy life dear to me. For thy father, thy mother,  
I knew them,—I know them."  
"O can it be? you!  
My dearest dear father! my mother! you knew,  
You know them?"  
She bowed, half averting, her head  
In silence.  
He brokenly, timidly said,  
"Do they know I am thus?"  
"Hush!" . . . she smiled, as she drew  
From her bosom two letters; and—can it be true?  
That beloved and familiar writing!  
He burst  
Into tears . . . "My poor mother—my father! the worst  
Will have reached them!"  
"No, no!" she exclaimed with a smile,  
"They know you are living; they know that meanwhile  
I am watching beside you. Young soldier, weep not!"  
But still on the nun's nursing bosom, the hot  
Fevered brow of the boy weeping wildly is pressed.  
There, at last, the young heart sobbs itself into rest:  
And he hears, as it were between smiling and weeping,

The calm voice say . . . "Sleep!"  
And he sleeps, he is sleeping.

## XIII.

And day followed day. And, as wave follows wave,  
With the tide, day by day, life, reissuing, drave  
Through that young hardy frame novel currents of health.  
Yet some strange obstruction, which life's self by stealth  
Seemed to cherish, impeded life's progress. And still  
A feebleness, less of the frame than the will,  
Clung about the sick man: hid and harbored within  
The sad hollow eyes: pinched the cheek pale and thin:  
And clothed the wan fingers with languor.  
And there,  
Day by day, night by night, unremitting in care,  
Unwearied in watching, so cheerful of mien,  
And so gentle of hand, sat the Sœur Seraphine!

## XIV.

A strange woman truly! not young; yet her face,  
Wan and worn, as it was, bore about it the trace  
Of a beauty which time could not ruin. For the whole  
Quiet cheek, youth's lost bloom left transparent, the soul  
Seemed to fill with its own light, like some sunny fountain  
Everlastingly fed from far off in the mountain  
That pours, in a garden deserted, its streams,  
And all the more lovely for loneliness seems.  
So that, watching that face, you would scarce pause to guess  
The years which its calm careworn lines might express,

Feeling only what suffering with these must have passed  
To have perfected there so much sweetness at last.

## XV.

Thus, one bronzen evening, when day had put out  
His brief thrifty fires, and the wind was about,  
The nun, watchful still by the boy, on his own  
Laid a firm quiet hand, and the deep tender tone  
Of her voice moved the silence.  
She said . . . "I have healed  
These wounds of the body. Why hast thou concealed,  
Young soldier, that yet open wound in the heart?  
Wilt thou trust no hand near it?"  
He winced, with a start,  
As of one that is suddenly touched on the spot  
From which every nerve derives suffering.  
"What?  
Lies my heart, then, so bare?" he moaned bitterly.  
"Nay,"  
With compassionate accents she hastened to say,  
"Do you think that these eyes are with sorrow, young man,  
So all unfamiliar, indeed, as to scan  
Her features, yet know them not?"  
"O, was it spoken,  
'Go ye forth, heal the sick, lift the low, bind the broken!'  
Of the body alone? Is our mission, then, done,  
When we leave the bruised hearts, if we bind the bruised bone!  
Nay, is not the mission of mercy twofold?  
Whence twofold, perchance, are the powers, that we hold  
To fulfil it, of Heaven! For Heaven doth still  
To us, Sisters, it may be, who seek it, send skill



Won from long intercourse with affliction, and art  
 Helped of Heaven, to bind up the broken of heart.  
 Trust to me!" (His two feeble hands in her own  
 She drew gently.) "Trust to me!" (she said, with soft tone):  
 "I am not so dead in remembrance to all  
 I have died in this world, but what I recall  
 Enough of its sorrow, enough of its To grieve for both,—save from both haply! The dial  
 Receives many shades, and each points to the sun.  
 The shadows are many, the sunlight is one.  
 Life's sorrows still fluctuate: God's love does not.  
 And His love is unchanged, when it changes our lot.  
 Looking up to this light, which is common to all,  
 And down to these shadows, on each side, that fall  
 In time's silent circle, so various for each,  
 Is it nothing to know that they never can reach  
 So far, but what light lies beyond them forever?  
 Trust to me! O, if in this hour I endeavor  
 To trace the shade creeping across the young life  
 Which, in prayer till this hour, I have watched through its strife  
 With the shadow of death, 'tis with this faith alone,  
 That, in tracing the shade, I shall find out the sun.  
 Trust to me!"  
 She paused: he was weeping.  
 Small need  
 Of added appeal, or entreaty, indeed,  
 Had those gentle accents to win from his pale  
 And parched, trembling lips, as it rose, the brief tale

Of a life's early sorrow. The story is old,  
 And in words few as may be shall straightway be told.

## XVI.

A few years ago, ere the fair form of Peace  
 Was driven from Europe, a young girl—the niece  
 Of a French noble, leaving an old Norman pile  
 By the wild northern seas, came to dwell for a while  
 With a lady allied to her race,—an old dame  
 Of a threefold legitimate virtue, and name,  
 In the Faubourg Saint Germain.  
 Upon that fair child,  
 From childhood, nor father nor mother had smiled.  
 One uncle their place in her life had supplied,  
 And their place in her heart: she had grown at his side,  
 And under his roof-tree, and in his regard,  
 From childhood to girlhood.  
 This fair orphan ward  
 Seemed the sole human creature that lived in the heart  
 Of that stern rigid man, or whose smile could impart  
 One ray of response to the eyes which, above  
 Her fair infant forehead, looked down with a love  
 That seemed almost stern, so intense was its chill  
 Lofty stillness, like sunlight on some lonely hill  
 Which is colder and stiller than sunlight elsewhere.  
 Grass grew in the court-yard; the chambers were bare  
 In that ancient mansion; when first the stern tread  
 Of its owner awakened their echoes long dead:

Bringing with him this infant (the child of a brother),  
 Whom, dying, the hands of a desolate mother  
 Had placed on his bosom. 'Twas said—right or wrong—  
 That, in the lone mansion, left tenantless long,  
 To which, as a stranger, its lord now returned,  
 In years yet recalled, through loud midnights had burned  
 The light of wild orgies. Be that false or true,  
 Slow and sad was the footstep which now wandered through  
 Those desolate chambers; and calm and severe  
 Was the life of their inmate.  
 Men now saw appear  
 Every morn at the mass that firm sorrowful face,  
 Which seemed to lock up in a cold iron case  
 Tears hardened to crystal. Yet harsh if he were,  
 His severity seemed to be trebly severe  
 In the rule of his own rigid life, which, at least,  
 Was benignant to others. The poor parish priest,  
 Who lived on his largess, his piety praised.  
 The peasant was fed, and the chapel was raised,  
 And the cottage was built, by his liberal hand.  
 Yet he seemed in the midst of his good deeds to stand  
 A lone, and unloved, and unlovable man.  
 There appeared some inscrutable flaw in the plan  
 Of his life, that love failed to pass over.  
 That child  
 Alone did not fear him, nor shrink from him; smiled  
 To his frown, and dispelled it.  
 The sweet sportive elf

Seemed the type of some joy lost, and missed, in himself.  
 Ever welcome he suffered her glad face to glide  
 In on hours when to others his door was denied:  
 And many a time with a mute moody look  
 He would watch her at prattle and play, like a brook  
 Whose babble disturbs not the quietest spot,  
 But soothes us because we need answer it not.  
 But few years had passed o'er that childhood before  
 A change came among them. A letter, which bore  
 Sudden consequence with it, one morning was placed  
 In the hands of the lord of the chateau. He paced  
 To and fro in his chamber a whole night alone  
 After reading that letter. At dawn he was gone.  
 Weeks passed. When he came back again he returned  
 With a tall ancient dame, from whose lips the child learned  
 That they were of the same race and name. With a face  
 Sad and anxious, to this withered stock of the race  
 He confided the orphan and left them alone  
 In the lonely old house.  
 In a few days 'twas known,  
 To the angry surprise of half Paris, that one  
 Of the chiefs of that party which, still clinging on  
 To the banner that bears the white lilies of France,  
 Will fight 'neath no other, nor yet for the chance  
 Of restoring their own, had renounced the watchword  
 And the creed of his youth in unsheathing his sword



For a Fatherland fathered no more  
 (such is fate !)  
 By legitimate parents.  
 And meanwhile, elate  
 And in no wise disturbed by what  
 Paris might say,  
 The new soldier thus wrote to a friend  
 far away :—  
 "To the life of inaction farewell !  
 After all,  
 Creeds the oldest may crumble, and  
 dynasties fall,  
 But the sole grand Legitimacy will  
 endure,  
 In whatever makes death noble, life  
 strong and pure.  
 Freedom ! action ! . . . the desert to  
 breathe in,—the lance  
 Of the Arab to follow ! I go ! *Vive  
 la France !*"

Few and rare were the meetings  
 henceforth, as years fled,  
 'Twixt the child and the soldier.  
 The two women led  
 Lone lives in the lone house. Mean-  
 while the child grew  
 Into girlhood ; and, like a sunbeam,  
 sliding through  
 Her green quiet years, changed by  
 gentle degrees  
 To the loveliest vision of youth a  
 youth sees  
 In his loveliest fancies : as pure as a  
 pearl,  
 And as perfect : a noble and inno-  
 cent girl,  
 With eighteen sweet summers dis-  
 solved in the light  
 Of her lovely and lovable eyes, soft  
 and bright !  
 Then her guardian wrote to the  
 dame, . . . "Let Constance  
 Go with you to Paris. I trust that  
 in France  
 I may be ere the close of the year.  
 I confide  
 My life's treasure to you. Let her  
 see, at your side,  
 The world which we live in."  
 To Paris then came

Constance to abide with that old  
 stately dame  
 In that old stately Faubourg.  
 The young Englishman  
 Thus met her. 'Twas there their  
 acquaintance began,  
 There it closed. That old miracle—  
 Love-at-first-sight—  
 Needs no explanations. The heart  
 reads aright  
 Its destiny sometimes. His love nei-  
 ther chidden  
 Nor checked, the young soldier was  
 graciously bidden  
 An habitual guest to that house by  
 the dame.  
 His own candid graces, the world-  
 honored name  
 Of his father (in him not dishonored)  
 were both [ing loath,  
 Fair titles to favor. His love, noth-  
 The old lady observed, was returned  
 by Constance.  
 And as the child's uncle his absence  
 from France  
 Yet prolonged, she (thus easing long  
 self-gratulation)  
 Wrote to him a lengthened and mov-  
 ing narration  
 Of the graces and gifts of the young  
 English wooer :  
 His father's fair fame ; the boy's  
 deference to her ;  
 His love for Constance,—unaffected,  
 sincere ;  
 And the girl's love for him, read by  
 her in those clear  
 Limpid eyes ; then the pleasure with  
 which she awaited  
 Her cousin's approval of all she had  
 stated.

At length from that cousin an an-  
 swer there came,  
 Brief, stern ; such as stunned and  
 astonished the dame.  
 "Let Constance leave Paris with you  
 on the day  
 You receive this. Until my return  
 she may stay

At her convent awhile. If my niece  
 wishes ever  
 To behold me again, understand, she  
 will never  
 Wed that man.  
 "You have broken faith with me.  
 Farewell !"

No appeal from that sentence.  
 It needs not to tell  
 The tears of Constance, nor the grief  
 of her lover :  
 The dream they had laid out their  
 lives in was over.  
 Bravely strove the young soldier to  
 look in the face  
 Of a life, where invisible hands  
 seemed to trace  
 O'er the threshold, these words . . .  
 "Hope no more !"

Unreturned  
 Had his love been, the strong manful  
 heart would have spurned  
 That weakness which suffers a wo-  
 man to lie  
 At the roots of man's life, like a  
 canker, and dry  
 And wither the sap of life's purpose.  
 But there  
 Lay the bitterer part of the pain !  
 Could he dare  
 To forget he was loved ? that he  
 grieved not alone ?  
 Recording a love that drew sorrow  
 upon  
 The woman he loved, for himself  
 dare he seek  
 Surcease to that sorrow, which thus  
 held him weak,  
 Beat him down, and destroyed him ?  
 News reached him indeed,  
 Through a comrade, who brought  
 him a letter to read  
 From the dame who had care of  
 Constance (it was one  
 To whom, when at Paris, the boy  
 had been known,  
 A Frenchman, and friend of the Fau-  
 bourg), which said  
 That Constance, although never a  
 murmur betrayed

What she suffered, in silence grew  
 paler each day.  
 And seemed visibly drooping and  
 dying away.  
 It was then he sought death.

## XVII.

Thus the tale ends. 'Twas told  
 With such broken, passionate words,  
 as unfold  
 In glimpses alone, a coiled grief.  
 Through each pause  
 Of its fitful recital, in raw gusty  
 flaws,  
 The rain shook the canvas, unheed-  
 ed ; aloof,  
 And unheeded, the night-wind  
 around the tent-roof  
 At intervals wirbled. And when all  
 was said,  
 The sick man, exhausted, drooped  
 backward his head,  
 And fell into a feverish slumber.  
 Long while  
 Sat the Sœur Seraphine, in deep  
 thought. The still smile  
 That was wont, angel-wise, to inhab-  
 it her face  
 And make it like heaven, was fled  
 from its place  
 In her eyes, on her lips ; and a deep  
 sadness there  
 Seemed to darken the lines of long  
 sorrow and care,  
 As low to herself she sighed . . .  
 "Hath it, Eugène,  
 Been so long, then, the struggle ? . . .  
 and yet, all in vain !  
 Nay, not all in vain ! Shall the  
 world gain a man,  
 And yet Heaven lose a soul ? Have  
 I done all I can ?  
 Soul to soul, did he say ? Soul to  
 soul, be it so !  
 And then,—soul of mine, whither ?  
 whither ?"

## XVIII.

Large, slow,  
 Silent tears in those deep eyes as-  
 cended, and fell.



"Here, at least, I have failed not"  
 . . . she mused . . . "this is  
 well!"  
 She drew from her bosom two letters.  
 In one,  
 A mother's heart, wild with alarm  
 for her son,  
 Breathed bitterly forth its despairing  
 appeal.  
 "The pledge of a love owed to thee,  
 O Lucile!  
 The hope of a home saved by thee,—  
 of a heart  
 Which hath never since then (thrice  
 endeared as thou art!)  
 Ceased to bless thee, to pray for thee,  
 save! . . . save my son!  
 And if not" . . . the letter went brokenly on,  
 "Heaven help us!"  
 Then followed, from Alfred, a few  
 Blotted heart-broken pages. He  
 mournfully drew,  
 With pathos, the picture of that  
 earnest youth,  
 So unlike his own: how in beauty  
 and truth  
 He had nurtured that nature, so  
 simple and brave!  
 And how he had striven his son's  
 youth to save  
 From the errors so sadly redeemed  
 in his own,  
 And so deeply repented: how thus,  
 in that son,  
 In whose youth he had garnered his  
 age, he had seemed  
 To be blessed by a pledge that the  
 past was redeemed,  
 And forgiven. He bitterly went on  
 to speak  
 Of the boy's baffled love; in which  
 fate seemed to break  
 Unawares on his dreams with re-  
 tributive pain,  
 And the ghosts of the past rose to  
 scourge back again  
 The hopes of the future. To sue for  
 consent  
 Pride forbade: and the hope his old  
 foe might relent

Experience rejected . . . "My life  
 for the boy's!"  
 (He exclaimed); "for I die with my  
 son, if he dies!  
 Lucile! Heaven bless you for all you  
 have done!  
 Save him, save him, Lucile! save  
 my son! save my son!"

## XIX.

"Ay!" murmured the Sœur Sera-  
 phine . . . "heart to heart!  
 There, at least, I have failed not!  
 Fulfilled is my part?  
 Accomplished my mission? One act  
 crowns the whole.  
 Do I linger? Nay, be it so, then!  
 . . . Soul to soul!"  
 She knelt down, and prayed. Still  
 the boy slumbered on.  
 Dawn broke. The pale nun from  
 the bedside was gone.

## XX.

Meanwhile, 'mid his aides-de-camp,  
 busily bent  
 O'er the daily reports, in his well-  
 ordered tent  
 There sits a French General,—  
 bronzed by the sun  
 And seared by the sands of Algeria.  
 One  
 Who forth from the wars of the wild  
 Kabylee  
 Had strangely and rapidly risen to  
 be  
 The idol, the darling, the dream, and  
 the star  
 Of the younger French chivalry:  
 daring in war,  
 And wary in council. He entered,  
 indeed,  
 Late in life (and discarding his  
 Bourbonite creed)  
 The Army of France: and had risen,  
 in part,  
 From a singular aptitude proved for  
 the art  
 Of that wild desert warfare of am-  
 bush, surprise,  
 And stratagem, which to the French  
 camp supplies

Its subtlest intelligence; partly from  
 chance;  
 Partly, too, from a name and posi-  
 tion which France  
 Was proud to put forward; but  
 mainly, in fact,  
 From the prudence to plan, and the  
 daring to act,  
 In frequent emergencies startlingly  
 shown,  
 To the rank which he now held,—  
 intrepidly won  
 With many a wound, trenched in  
 many a scar,  
 From fierce Milianah and Sidi-Sakh-  
 dar.

## XXI.

All within, and without, that warm  
 tent seems to bear  
 Smiling token of provident order and  
 care.  
 All about, a well-fed, well-clad sol-  
 diery stands  
 In groups round the music of mirth-  
 breathing bands.  
 In and out of the tent, all day long,  
 to and fro,  
 The messengers come, and the mes-  
 sengers go,  
 Upon missions of mercy, or errands  
 of toil:  
 To report how the sapper contends  
 with the soil  
 In the terrible trench, how the sick  
 man is faring  
 In the hospital tent: and, combin-  
 ing, comparing,  
 Constructing, within moves the  
 brain of one man,  
 Moving all.  
 He is bending his brow o'er some  
 plan  
 For the hospital service, wise, skil-  
 ful, humane.  
 The officer standing beside him is  
 fain  
 To refer to the angel solicitous  
 cares  
 Of the Sisters of Charity: one he  
 declares

To be known through the camp as a  
 seraph of grace:  
 He has seen, all have seen her in-  
 deed, in each place  
 Where suffering is seen, silent, ac-  
 tive,—the Sœur . . .  
 Sœur . . . how do they call her?  
 "Ay, truly, of her  
 I have heard much," the General,  
 musing, replies;  
 "And we owe her already (unless  
 rumor lies)  
 The lives of not few of our bravest.  
 You mean . . .  
 Ay, how do they call her? . . . the  
 Sœur—Seraphine,  
 (Is it not so?) I rarely forget names  
 once heard."

"Yes; the Sœur Seraphine. Her I  
 meant."

"On my word,  
 I have much wished to see her. I  
 fancy I trace,  
 In some facts traced to her, some-  
 thing more than the grace  
 Of an angel: I mean an acute  
 human mind,  
 Ingenious, constructive, intelligent.  
 Find  
 And, if possible, let her come to me.  
 We shall,  
 I think, aid each other.

"Où, mon Général;  
 I believe she has lately obtained the  
 permission  
 To tend some sick man in the Second  
 Division

Of our Ally: they say a relation.  
 "Ay, so?  
 A relation?"

"'Tis said so."  
 "The name do you know?"  
 "Non, mon Général."  
 While they spoke yet, there went  
 A murmur and stir round the door  
 of the tent.

"A Sister of Charity craves, in a  
 case  
 Of urgent and serious importance,  
 the grace



Of brief private speech with the  
General there.  
Will the General speak with her?"  
"Bid her declare  
Her mission."  
"She will not. She craves to be  
seen  
And be heard."  
"Well, her name then?"  
"The Sœur Seraphine."  
"Clear the tent. She may enter."

## XXII.

The tent has been cleared.  
The chieftain stroked moodily some-  
what his beard,  
A sable long silvered : and pressed  
down his brow  
On his hand, heavy veined. All his  
countenance, now  
Unwitnessed, at once fell dejected,  
and dreary,  
As a curtain let fall by a hand that's  
grown weary,  
Into puckers and folds. From his  
lips, unrepressed,  
Steals th' impatient quick sigh,  
which reveals in man's breast  
A conflict concealed, an experience  
at strife  
With itself,—the vexed heart's pass-  
ing protest on life.  
He turned to his papers. He heard  
the light tread  
Of a faint foot behind him : and,  
lifting his head,  
Said, "Sit, Holy Sister ! your worth  
is well known  
To the hearts of our soldiers ; nor  
less to my own.  
I have much wished to see you. I  
owe you some thanks :  
In the name of all those you have  
saved to our ranks  
I record them. Sit ! Now then, your  
mission ?"

The nun  
Paused silent. The General eyed  
her anon  
More keenly. His aspect grew  
troubled. A change

Darkened over his features. He  
muttered . . . . "Strange !  
strange !  
Any face should so strongly remind  
me of *her* !  
Fool ! again the delirium, the dream !  
does it stir ?  
Does it move as of old ? Psha !  
"Sit, Sister ! I wait  
Your answer, my time halts but hur-  
riedly. State  
The cause why you seek me ?"  
"The cause ? ay, the cause !"  
She vaguely repeated. Then, after  
a pause,—  
As one who, awaked unawares,  
would put back  
The sleep that forever returns in the  
track  
Of dreams which, though scared and  
dispersed, not the less  
Settle back to faint eyelids that yield  
'neath their stress,  
Like doves to a penthouse,—a move-  
ment she made,  
Less toward him than away from  
herself ; drooped her head  
And folded her hands on her bosom :  
long, spare,  
Fatigued, mournful hands ! Not a  
stream of stray hair  
Escaped the pale bands ; scarce more  
pale than the face  
Which they bound and locked up in  
a rigid white case.  
She fixed her eyes on him. There  
crept a vague awe  
O'er his sense, such as ghosts cast.  
"Eugène de Luvois,  
The cause which recalls me again to  
your side  
Is a promise that rests unfulfilled,"  
she replied.  
"I come to fulfil it."  
He sprang from the place  
Where he sat, pressed his hand, as  
in doubt, o'er his face ;  
And, cautiously feeling each step o'er  
the ground  
That he trod on (as one who walks  
fearing the sound

Of his footstep may startle and scare  
out of sight  
Some strange sleeping creature on  
which he would light  
Unawares), crept towards her ; one  
heavy hand laid  
On her shoulder in silence ; bent o'er  
her his head,  
Searched her face with a long look  
of troubled appeal  
Against doubt ; staggered barkward,  
and murmured . . . "Lucile !  
Thus we meet then ? . . . here ! . .  
thus ?"  
"Soul to soul, ay, Eugène,  
As I pledged you my word that we  
should meet again.  
Dead, . . ." she murmured, "long  
dead ! all that lived in our  
lives,—  
Thine and mine,—saving that which  
ev'n life's self survives,  
The soul ! 'Tis my soul seeks thine  
own. What may reach  
From my life to thy life (so wide  
each from each !)  
Save the soul to the soul ? To the  
soul I would speak.  
May I do so ?"  
He said (worked and white was his  
check  
As he raised it), "Speak to me !"  
Deep, tender, serene,  
And sad was the gaze which the  
Sœur Seraphine  
Held on him. She spoke.

## XXIII.

As some minstrel may fling,  
Preluding the music yet mute in each  
string,  
A swift hand athwart the hushed  
heart of the whole,  
Seeking which note most fitly may  
first move the soul ;  
And, leaving untroubled the deep  
chords below,  
Move pathetic in numbers remote ;—  
even so  
The voice which was moving the  
heart of that man

Far away from its yet voiceless pur-  
pose began,  
Far away in the pathos remote of  
the past ;  
Until, through her words, rose be-  
fore him, at last,  
Bright and dark in their beauty, the  
hopes that were gone  
Unaccomplished from life.  
He was mute.

## XXIV.

She went on.  
And still further down the dim past  
did she lead  
Each yielding remembrance, far, far  
off, to feed  
'Mid the pastures of youth, in the  
twilight of hope,  
And the valleys of boyhood, the  
fresh-flowered slope  
Of life's dawning land !  
'Tis the heart of a boy,  
With its indistinct, passionate pre-  
sence of joy !  
The unproved desire,—the unaimed  
aspiration,—  
The deep conscious life that fore-  
stalls consummation ;  
With ever a flitting delight,—one  
arm's length  
In advance of the august inward im-  
pulse.

The strength  
Of the spirit which troubles the seed  
in the sand  
With the birth of the palm-tree !  
Let ages expand  
The glorious creature ! The ages lie  
shut  
(Safe, see ! ) in the seed, at time's  
signal to put  
Forth their beauty and power, leaf  
by leaf, layer on layer,  
Till the palm strikes the sun, and  
stands broad in blue air.  
So the palm in the palm-seed ! so,  
slowly—so, wrought  
Year by year unperceived, hope on  
hope, thought by thought,  
Trace the growth of the man from its  
germ in the boy.