

Fell those early love-letters, strewn,  
scattered, and shed  
At her feet — life's lost blossoms! De-  
jected, her head  
On her bosom was bowed. Her gaze  
vaguely strayed o'er  
Those strewn records of passionate mo-  
ments no more.  
From each page to her sight leapt some  
word that belied  
The composure with which she that day  
had denied  
Every claim on her heart to those poor  
perished years.  
They avenged themselves now, and she  
burst into tears.

## CANTO IV.

## I.

*Letter from COUSIN JOHN to COUSIN  
ALFRED.*

"TIME up, you rascal! Come back, or  
be hanged.  
Matilda grows peevish. Her mother  
harangued  
For a whole hour this morning about  
you. The deuce!  
What on earth can I say to you? —  
Nothing's of use.  
And the blame of the whole of your  
shocking behavior  
Falls on me, sir! Come back, — do you  
hear? — or I leave your  
Affairs, and abjure you forever. Come  
back  
To your anxious betrothed; and per-  
plexed

"COUSIN JACK."

## II.

Alfred needed, in truth, no entreaties  
from John  
To increase his impatience to fly from  
Serchon.  
All the place was now fraught with sen-  
sations of pain  
Which, whilst in it, he strove to escape  
from in vain.  
A wild instinct warned him to fly from  
a place  
Where he felt that some fatal event,  
swift of pace,

Was approaching his life. In despite  
his endeavor  
To think of Matilda, her image forever  
Was effaced from his fancy by that of  
Lucile.  
From the ground which he stood on he  
felt himself reel.  
Scared, alarmed by those feelings to  
which, on the day  
Just before, all his heart had so soon  
given way,  
When he caught, with a strange sense  
of fear, for assistance,  
At what was, till then, the great fact in  
existence,  
'T was a phantom he grasped.

## III.

Having sent for his guide,  
He ordered his horse, and determined to  
ride  
Back forthwith to Bigorre.  
Then, the guide, who well knew  
Every haunt of those hills, said the wild  
lake of Oo  
Lay a league from Serchon; and sug-  
gested a track  
By the lake to Bigorre, which, transvers-  
ing the back  
Of the mountain, avoided a circuit be-  
tween  
Two long valleys; and thinking, "Per-  
chance change of scene  
May create change of thought," Alfred  
Vargrave agreed,  
Mounted horse, and set forth to Bigorre  
at full speed.

## IV.

His guide rode beside him.  
The king of the guides!  
The gallant Bernard! ever boldly he  
rides,  
Ever gayly he sings! For to him, from  
of old,  
The hills have confided their secrets,  
and told  
Where the white partridge lies, and the  
cock o' the woods;  
Where the izard flits fine through the  
cold solitudes;  
Where the bear lurks perdu; and the  
lynx on his prey  
At nightfall descends, when the moun-  
tains are gray;  
Where the sassafras blooms, and the  
bluebell is born,

And the wild rhododendron first reddens  
at morn;  
Where the source of the waters is fine  
as a thread;  
How the storm on the wild Maladetta is  
spread;  
Where the thunder is hoarded, the snows  
lie asleep,  
Whence the torrents are fed, and the  
cataracts leap;  
And, familiarly known in the hamlets,  
the vales  
Have whispered to him all their thou-  
sand love-tales;  
He has laughed with the girls, he has  
leaped with the boys;  
Ever blithe, ever bold, ever boon, he  
enjoys  
An existence untroubled by envy or  
strife,  
While he feeds on the dews and the juices  
of life.  
And so lightly he sings, and so gayly  
he rides,  
For BERNARD LE SAUTEUR is the king  
of all guides!

## V.

But Bernard found, that day, neither  
song nor love-tale,  
Nor adventure, nor laughter, nor legend  
avail  
To arouse from his deep and profound  
revery  
Him that silent beside him rode fast as  
could be.

## VI.

Ascending the mountain they slackened  
their pace,  
And the marvellous prospect each moment  
changed face.  
The breezy and pure inspirations of morn  
Breathed about them. The scarped  
ravaged mountains, all worn  
By the torrents, whose course they  
watched faintly meander,  
Were alive with the diamonded shy sal-  
amander.  
They paused o'er the bosom of purple  
abysses,  
And wound through a region of green  
wildernesses;  
The waters went wirbling above and  
around,  
The forests hung heaped in their shad-  
ows profound.

Here the Larboust, and there Aventin,  
Castellon,  
Which the Demon of Tempest, descend-  
ing upon,  
Had wasted with fire, and the peaceful  
Cazeaux  
They marked; and far down in the sun-  
shine below,  
Half dipped in a valley of airiest blue,  
The white happy homes of the village  
of Oo,  
Where the age is yet golden.  
And high overhead  
The wrecks of the combat of Titans were  
spread.  
Red granite and quartz, in the alchemic  
sun,  
Fused their splendors of crimson and  
crystal in one;  
And deep in the moss gleamed the deli-  
cate shells,  
And the dew lingered fresh in the heavy  
harebells;  
The large violet burned; the campanula  
blue;  
And Autumn's own flower, the saffron,  
peered through  
The red-berried brambles and thick sas-  
safras;  
And fragrant with thyme was the deli-  
cate grass;  
And high up, and higher, and highest  
of all,  
The secular phantom of snow!  
O'er the wall  
Of a gray sunless glen gaping drowsy  
below,  
That aerial spectre, revealed in the glow  
Of the great golden dawn, hovers faint  
on the eye,  
And appears to grow in, and grow out  
of, the sky,  
And plays with the fancy, and baffles  
the sight.  
Only reached by the vast rosy ripple of  
light,  
And the cool star of eve, the Imperial  
Thing,  
Half unreal, like some mythological  
king  
That dominates all in a fable of old,  
Takes command of a valley as fair to  
behold  
As aught in old fables; and, seen or  
unseen,  
Dwells aloof over all, in the vast and  
serene



Sacred sky, where the footsteps of spirits are furled  
'Mid the clouds beyond which spreads the infinite world  
Of man's last aspirations, unfathomed, untrod,  
Save by Even and Morn, and the angels of God.

## VII.

Meanwhile, as they journeyed, that serpentine road,  
Now abruptly reversed, unexpectedly showed  
A gay cavalcade some few feet in advance.  
Alfred Vargrave's heart beat; for he saw at a glance  
The slight form of Lucile in the midst. His next look  
Showed him, joyously ambling beside her, the Duke.  
The rest of the troop which had thus caught his ken  
He knew not, nor noticed them (women and men).  
They were laughing and talking together. Soon after  
His sudden appearance suspended their laughter.

## VIII.

"You here! . . . I imagined you far on your way  
To Bigorre!" . . . said Lucile. "What has caused you to stay?"  
"I am on my way to Bigorre," he replied,  
"But, since my way would seem to be yours, let me ride  
For one moment beside you." And then, with a stoop,  
At her ear, . . . "and forgive me!"

## IX.

By this time the troop  
Had regathered its numbers.  
Lucile was as pale  
As the cloud 'neath their feet, on its way to the vale.  
The Duke had observed it, nor quitted her side,  
For even one moment, the whole of the ride.  
Alfred smiled, as he thought, "he is jealous of her!"  
And the thought of this jealousy added a spur

To his firm resolution and effort to please.  
He talked much; was witty, and quite at his ease.

## X.

After noontide, the clouds, which had traversed the east  
Half the day, gathered closer, and rose and increased.  
The air changed and chilled. As though out of the ground,  
There ran up the trees a confused hissing sound,  
And the wind rose. The guides sniffed, like chamois, the air,  
And looked at each other, and halted, and there  
Unbuckled the cloaks from the saddles. The white  
Aspens rustled, and turned up their frail leaves in fright.  
All announced the approach of the tempest.

## Erelong,

Thick darkness descended the mountains among;  
And a vivid, vindictive, and serpentine flash  
Gored the darkness, and shore it across with a gash.  
The rain fell in large heavy drops. And anon  
Broke the thunder.  
The horses took fright, every one.  
The Duke's in a moment was far out of sight.  
The guides whooped. The band was obliged to alight;  
And, dispersed up the perilous pathway, walked blind  
To the darkness before from the darkness behind.

## XI.

And the Storm is abroad in the mountains!  
He fills  
The crouched hollows and all the oracular hills  
With dread voices of power. A roused million or more  
Of wild echoes reluctantly rise from their hoar  
Immemorial ambush, and roll in the wake  
Of the cloud, whose reflection leaves vivid the lake.

And the wind, that wild robber, for plunder descends  
From invisible lands, o'er those black mountain ends;  
He howls as he hounds down his prey; and his lash  
Tears the hair of the timorous wan mountain-ash,  
That clings to the rocks, with her garments all torn,  
Like a woman in fear; then he blows his hoarse horn,  
And is off, the fierce guide of destruction and terror,  
Up the desolate heights, 'mid an intricate error  
Of mountain and mist.

## XII.

There is war in the skies!  
Lo! the black-winged legions of tempest arise  
O'er those sharp splintered rocks that are gleaming below  
In the soft light, so fair and so fatal, as though  
Some seraph burned through them, the thunder-bolt searching  
Which the black cloud unbosomed just now. Lo! the lurching  
And shivering pine-trees, like phantoms, that seem  
To waver above, in the dark; and yon stream,  
How it hurries and roars, on its way to the white  
And paralyzed lake there, appalled at the sight  
Of the things seen in heaven!

## XIII.

Through the darkness and awe  
That had gathered around him, Lord Alfred now saw,  
Revealed in the fierce and evanishing glare  
Of the lightning that momentarily pulsed through the air,  
A woman alone on a shelf of the hill,  
With her cheek coldly propped on her hand, — and as still  
As the rock that she sat on, which beetled above  
The black lake beneath her.  
All terror, all love,

Added speed to the instinct with which he rushed on.  
For one moment the blue lightning swathed the whole stone  
In its lurid embrace: like the sleek dazzling snake  
That encircles a sorceress, charmed for her sake  
And lulled by her loveliness; fawning, it played  
And caressingly twined round the feet and the head  
Of the woman who sat there, undaunted and calm  
As the soul of that solitude, listing the psalm  
Of the plangent and laboring tempest roll slow  
From the caldron of midnight and vapor below.  
Next moment from bastion to bastion, all round,  
Of the siege-circled mountains, there tumbled the sound  
Of the battering thunder's indefinite peal,  
And Lord Alfred had sprung to the feet of Lucile.

## XIV.

She started. Once more, with its flickering wand,  
The lightning approached her. In terror, her hand  
Alfred Vargrave had seized within his; and he felt  
The light fingers that coldly and lingeringly dwelt  
In the grasp of his own, tremble faintly.  
"See! see!  
Where the whirlwind hath stricken and strangled yon tree!"  
She exclaimed, . . . "like the passion that brings on its breath,  
To the being it embraces, destruction and death!  
Alfred Vargrave, the lightning is round you!"  
"Lucile!  
I hear — I see — naught but yourself. I can feel  
Nothing here but your presence. My pride fights in vain  
With the truth that leaps from me. We two meet again  
'Neath yon terrible heaven that is watching above



To avenge if I lie when I swear that I  
love, —  
And beneath yonder terrible heaven, at  
your feet,  
I humble my head and my heart. I en-  
treat  
Your pardon, Lucile, for the past, — I  
implore  
For the future your mercy, — implore it  
with more  
Of passion than prayer ever breathed.  
By the power  
Which invisibly touches us both in this  
hour,  
By the rights I have o'er you, Lucile, I  
demand" —

"The rights!" . . . said Lucile, and  
drew from him her hand.

"Yes, the rights! for what greater to  
man may belong  
Than the right to repair in the future  
the wrong  
To the past? and the wrong I have done  
you, of yore,  
Hath bequeathed to me all the sad right  
to restore,  
To retrieve, to amend! I, who injured  
your life,  
Urge the right to repair it, Lucile! Be  
my wife,  
My guide, my good angel, my all upon  
earth,  
And accept, for the sake of what yet may  
give worth  
To my life, its contrition!"

## xv.

He paused, for there came  
O'er the cheek of Lucile a swift flush  
like the flame  
That illumined at moments the darkness  
o'erhead.  
With a voice faint and marred by emotion,  
she said,  
"And your pledge to another?"

## xvi.

"Hush, hush!" he exclaimed,  
"My honor will live where my love  
lives, unshamed.  
T were poor honor indeed, to another to  
give  
That life of which you keep the heart.  
Could I live

In the light of those young eyes, sup-  
pressing a lie?  
Alas, no! *your* hand holds my whole  
destiny.  
I can never recall what my lips have  
avowed;  
In your love lies whatever can render me  
proud.  
For the great crime of all my existence  
hath been  
To have known you in vain. And the  
duty best seen,  
And most hallowed, — the duty most  
sacred and sweet,  
Is that which hath led me, Lucile, to  
your feet.

O speak! and restore me the blessing I  
lost  
When I lost you, — my pearl of all pearls  
beyond cost!  
And restore to your own life its youth,  
and restore  
The vision, the rapture, the passion of  
yore!  
Ere our brows had been dimmed in the  
dust of the world,  
When our souls their white wings yet  
exulting unfurled!

For your eyes rest no more on the un-  
quiet man,  
The wild star of whose course its pale  
orbit outran,  
Whom the formless indefinite future of  
youth,  
With its lying allurements, distracted.  
In truth  
I have wearily wandered the world, and  
I feel

That the least of your lovely regards, O  
Lucile,  
Is worth all the world can afford, and  
the dream  
Which, though followed forever, forever  
doth seem  
As fleeting, and distant, and dim, as of  
yore  
When it brooded in twilight, at dawn,  
on the shore  
Of life's untraversed ocean! I know the  
sole path  
To repose, which my desolate destiny hath,  
Is the path by whose course to your feet  
I return.  
And who else, O Lucile, will so truly  
discern,  
And so deeply revere, all the passionate  
strength,

The sublimity in you, as he whom at  
length  
These have saved from himself, for the  
truth they reveal  
To his worship?"

## xvii.

She spoke not; but Alfred could feel  
The light hand and arm, that upon him  
reposed,  
Thrill and tremble. Those dark eyes  
of hers were half closed;  
But, under their languid mysterious  
fringe,  
A passionate softness was beaming. One  
tinge  
Of faint inward fire flushed transparently  
through  
The delicate, pallid, and pure olive hue  
Of the cheek, half averted and drooped.  
The rich bosom  
Heaved, as when in the heart of a  
ruffled rose-blossom  
A bee is imprisoned and struggles.

## xviii.

Meanwhile  
The sun, in his setting, sent up the last  
smile  
Of his power, to baffle the storm. And,  
behold!  
O'er the mountains embattled, his  
armies, all gold,  
Rose and rested: while far up the dim  
airy crags,  
Its artillery silenced, its banners in rags,  
The rear of the tempest its sullen retreat  
Drew off slowly, receding in silence, to  
meet  
The powers of the night, which, now  
gathering afar,  
Had already sent forward one bright,  
signal star.  
The curls of her soft and luxuriant hair,  
From the dark riding-hat, which Lucile  
used to wear,  
Had escaped; and Lord Alfred now  
covered with kisses  
The redolent warmth of those long fall-  
ing tresses.  
Neither he, nor Lucile, felt the rain,  
which not yet  
Had ceased falling around them; when,  
splashed, drenched, and wet,  
The Duc de Luvois down the rough  
mountain course

Approached them as fast as the road,  
and his horse,  
Which was limping, would suffer. The  
beast had just now  
Lost his footing, and over the perilous  
brow  
Of the storm-haunted mountain his mas-  
ter had thrown;  
But the Duke, who was agile, had leaped  
to a stone,  
And the horse, being bred to the instinct  
which fills  
The breast of the wild mountaineer in  
these hills,  
Had scrambled again to his feet; and  
now master  
And horse bore about them the signs of  
disaster,  
As they heavily footed their way through  
the mist,  
The horse with his shoulder, the Duke  
with his wrist,  
Bruised and bleeding.

## xix.

If ever your feet, like my own,  
O reader, have traversed these moun-  
tains alone,  
Have you felt your identity shrink and  
contract  
At the sound of the distant and dim  
cataract,  
In the presence of nature's immensities?  
Say,  
Have you hung o'er the torrent, bedewed  
with its spray,  
And, leaving the rock-way, contorted  
and rolled,  
Like a huge couchant Typhon, fold  
heaped over fold,  
Tracked the summits, from which every  
step that you tread  
Rolls the loose stones, with thunder be-  
low, to the bed  
Of invisible waters, whose mystical sound  
Fills with awful suggestions the dizzy  
profound?  
And, laboring onwards, at last through  
a break  
In the walls of the world, burst at once  
on the lake?  
If you have, this description I might  
have withheld.  
You remember how strangely your bosom  
has swelled



At the vision revealed. On the over-  
worked soil  
Of this planet, enjoyment is sharpened  
by toil;  
And one seems, by the pain of ascending  
their height,  
To have conquered a claim to that won-  
derful sight.

## XX.

Hail, virginal daughter of cold Espingo!  
Hail, Naiad, whose realm is the cloud  
and the snow;  
For o'er thee the angels have whitened  
their wings,  
And the thirst of the seraphs is quenched  
at thy springs.  
What hand hath, in heaven, upheld  
thine expanse?  
When the breath of creation first fash-  
ioned fair France,  
Did the Spirit of Ill, in his downthrow  
appalling,  
Bruise the world, and thus hollow thy  
basin while falling?  
Ere the mammoth was born hath some  
monster unnamed  
The base of thy mountainous pedestal  
framed?  
And later, when Power to Beauty was  
wed,  
Did some delicate fairy embroider thy  
bed  
With the fragile valerian and wild col-  
umbine?

## XXI.

But thy secret thou keepest, and I will  
keep mine;  
For once gazing on thee, it flashed on  
my soul,  
All that secret! I saw in a vision the  
whole  
Vast design of the ages; what was and  
shall be!  
Hands unseen raised the veil of a great  
mystery  
For one moment. I saw, and I heard;  
and my heart  
Bore witness within me to infinite art,  
In infinite power proving infinite love;  
Caught the great choral chant, marked  
the dread pageant move—  
The divine Whence and Whither of life!  
But, O daughter  
Of Oo, not more safe in the deep silent  
water

Is thy secret, than mine in my heart.  
Even so.  
What I then saw and heard, the world  
never shall know.

## XXII.

The dimness of eve o'er the valleys had  
closed,  
The rain had ceased falling, the moun-  
tains reposed.  
The stars had enkindled in luminous  
courses  
Their slow-sliding lamps, when, re-  
mounting their horses,  
The riders retraversed that mighty ser-  
ration  
Of rock-work. Thus left to its own  
desolation,  
The lake, from whose glimmering limits  
the last  
Transient pomp of the pageants of sun-  
set had passed,  
Drew into its bosom the darkness, and  
only  
Admitted within it one image, — a lonely  
And tremulous phantom of flickering  
light  
That followed the mystical moon through  
the night.

## XXIII.

It was late when o'er Serchon at last  
they descended.  
To her chalet, in silence, Lord Alfred  
attended  
Lucile. As they parted she whispered  
him low,  
"You have made to me, Alfred, an offer  
I know  
All the worth of, believe me. I cannot  
reply  
Without time for reflection. Good night!  
—not good by."

"Alas! 'tis the very same answer you  
made  
To the Duc de Luvois but a day since,"  
he said.

"No, Alfred! the very same, no," she  
replied.  
Her voice shook. "If you love me,  
obey me.  
Abide my answer, to-morrow."

## XXIV.

Alas, Cousin Jack!

You Cassandra in breeches and boots!  
turn your back  
To the ruins of Troy. Prophet, seek not  
for glory  
Amongst thine own people.  
I follow my story.

## CANTO V.

## I.

UP!—forth again, Pegasus!—"Many's  
the slip,"  
Hath the proverb well said, "'twixt the  
cup and the lip!"  
How blest should we be, have I often  
conceived,  
Had we really achieved what we nearly  
achieved!  
We but catch at the skirts of the thing  
we would be,  
And fall back on the lap of a false destiny.  
So it will be, so has been, since this  
world began!  
And the happiest, noblest, and best part  
of man  
Is the part which he never hath fully  
played out:  
For the first and last word in life's vol-  
ume is—Doubt.  
The face the most fair to our vision al-  
lowed  
Is the face we encounter and lose in the  
crowd.  
The thought that most thrills our exist-  
ence is one  
Which, before we can frame it in lan-  
guage, is gone.  
O Horace! the rustic still rests by the  
river,  
But the river flows on, and flows past  
him forever!  
Who can sit down, and say, . . . "What  
I will be, I will"?  
Who stand up, and affirm . . . "What  
I was, I am still"?  
Who is it that must not, if questioned,  
say, . . . "What  
I would have remained, or become, I  
am not"?  
We are ever behind, or beyond, or beside  
Our intrinsic existence. Forever at hide  
And seek with our souls. Not in Hades  
alone  
Doth Sisyphus roll, ever frustrate, the  
stone,

Do the Danaïds ply, ever vainly, the sieve.  
Tasks as futile does earth to its denizens  
give.  
Yet there's none so unhappy, but what  
he hath been  
Just about to be happy, at some time, I  
ween;  
And none so beguiled and defrauded by  
chance,  
But what once, in his life, some minute  
circumstance  
Would have fully sufficed to secure him  
the bliss  
Which, missing it then, he forever must  
miss;  
And to most of us, ere we go down to  
the grave,  
Life, relenting, accords the good gift we  
would have;  
But, as though by some strange imper-  
fection in fate,  
The good gift, when it comes, comes a  
moment too late.  
The Future's great veil our breath fit-  
fully flaps,  
And behind it broods ever the mighty  
Perhaps.  
Yet! there's many a slip 'twixt the cup  
and the lip;  
But while o'er the brim of life's beaker  
I dip,  
Though the cup may next moment be  
shattered, the wine  
Spilt, one deep health I'll pledge, and  
that health shall be thine,  
O being of beauty and bliss! seen and  
known  
In the depths of my soul, and possessed  
there alone!  
My days know thee not; and my lips  
name thee never.  
Thy place in my poor life is vacant for-  
ever.  
We have met: we have parted. No  
more is recorded  
In my annals on earth. This alone was  
afforded  
To the man whom men knew me, or  
deem me, to be.  
But, far down, in the depth of my life's  
mystery,  
(Like the siren that under the deep  
ocean dwells,  
Whom the wind as it wails, and the  
wave as it swells,  
Cannot stir in the calm of her coralline  
halls,