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
the 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 châlet, 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 deeps 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,

'Mid the world's adamantine and dim pedestals;
At whose feet sit the sylphs and sea fairies; for whom
The almondine glimmers, the soft samphires bloom) —
Thou abidest and reignest forever, O Queen
Of that better world which thou swayest unseen!
My one perfect mistress! my all things in all!
Thee by no vulgar name known to men do I call:
For the seraphs have named thee to me in my sleep,
And that name is a secret I sacredly keep.
But, wherever this nature of mine is most fair,
And its thoughts are the purest — beloved, thou art there!
And whatever is noblest in aught that I do,
Is done to exalt and to worship thee too.
The world gave thee not to me, no! and the world
Cannot take thee away from me now. I have furled
The wings of my spirit about thy bright head;
At thy feet are my soul's immortalities spread.
Thou mightest have been to me much. Thou art more.
And in silence I worship, in darkness adore.
If life be not that which without us we find —
Chance, accident, merely — but rather the mind,
And the soul which, within us, survive-eth these things,
If our real existence have truly its springs
Less in that which we do than in that which we feel,
Not in vain do I worship, not hopeless I kneel!
For then, though I name thee not mistress or wife,
Thou art mine — and mine only, — O life of my life!
And though many's the slip 'twixt the cup and the lip,
Yet while o'er the brim of life's beaker I dip,
While there's life on the lip, while there's warmth in the wine,
One deep health I'll pledge, and that health shall be thine!

II.

This world, on whose peaceable breast we repose
Unconvulsed by alarm, once confused in the throes
Of a tumult divine, sea and land, moist and dry,
And in fiery fusion commixed earth and sky.
Time cooled it, and calmed it, and taught it to go
The round of its orbit in peace, long ago.
The wind changeth and whirleth continually:
All the rivers run down and run into the sea:
The wind whirleth about, and is presently stilled:
All the rivers run down, yet the sea is not filled:
The sun goeth forth from his chambers: the sun
Ariseth, and lo! he descendeth anon.
All returns to its place. Use and Habit are powers
Far stronger than Passion, in this world of ours.
The great laws of life readjust their infraction,
And to every emotion appoint a reaction.

III.

Alfred Vargrave had time, after leaving Lucile,
To review the rash step he had taken, and feel
What the world would have called "*his erroneous position.*"
Thought obtruded its claim, and enforced recognition:
Like a creditor who, when the gloss is worn out
On the coat which we once wore with pleasure, no doubt,
Sends us in his account for the garment we bought.
Every spendthrift to passion is debtor to thought.

IV.

He felt ill at ease with himself. He could feel

Little doubt what the answer would be from Lucile.
Her eyes, when they parted, — her voice, when they met,
Still enraptured his heart, which they haunted. And yet,
Though, exulting, he deemed himself loved, where he loved,
Through his mind a vague self-accusation there moved.
O'er his fancy, when fancy was fairest, would rise
The infantine face of Matilda, with eyes
So sad, so reproachful, so cruelly kind,
That his heart failed within him. In vain did he find
A thousand just reasons for what he had done:
The vision that troubled him would not be gone.
In vain did he say to himself, and with truth,
"Matilda has beauty, and fortune, and youth;
And her heart is too young to have deeply involved
All its hopes in the tie which must now be dissolved.
'T were a false sense of honor in me to suppress
The sad truth which I owe it to her to confess.
And what reason have I to presume this poor life
Of my own, with its languid and frivolous strife,
And without what alone might endear it to her,
Were a boon all so precious, indeed, to confer,
Its withdrawal can wrong her?
" It is not as though
I were bound to some poor village maiden, I know,
Unto whose simple heart mine were all upon earth,
Or to whose simple fortunes my own could give worth.
Matilda, in all the world's gifts, will not miss
Aught that I could procure her. 'T is best as it is!"

V.

In vain did he say to himself, "When I came
To this fatal spot, I had nothing to blame
Or reproach myself for, in the thoughts of my heart.
I could not foresee that its pulses would start
Into such strange emotion on seeing once more
A woman I left with indifference before.
I believed, and with honest conviction believed,
In my love for Matilda. I never conceived
That another could shake it. I deemed I had done
With the wild heart of youth, and looked hopefully on
To the soberer manhood, the worthier life,
Which I sought in the love that I vowed to my wife.
Poor child! she shall learn the whole truth. She shall know
What I knew not myself but a few days ago.
The world will console her, — her pride will support, —
Her youth will renew its emotions. In short,
There is nothing in me that Matilda will miss
When once we have parted. 'T is best as it is!"

VI.

But in vain did he reason and argue. Alas!
He yet felt unconvinced that '*t was* best as it was.
Out of reach of all reason, forever would rise
That infantine face of Matilda, with eyes
So sad, so reproachful, so cruelly kind,
That they harrowed his heart and distracted his mind.

VII.

And then, when he turned from these thoughts to Lucile,
Though his heart rose enraptured, he could not but feel
A vague sense of awe of her nature. Behind
All the beauty of heart, and the graces of mind,
Which he saw and revered in her, something unknown

And unseen in that nature still troubled his own.
He felt that Lucile penetrated and prized
Whatever was noblest and best, though disguised,
In himself; but he did not feel sure that he knew,
Or completely possessed, what, half hidden from view,
Remained lofty and lonely in *her*.
Then, her life,
So untamed, and so free! would she yield as a wife,
Independence, long claimed as a woman? Her name,
So linked by the world with that spurious fame
Which the beauty and wit of a woman assert,
In some measure, alas! to her own loss and hurt
In the serious thoughts of a man! . . . This reflection
O'er the love which he felt cast a shade of dejection,
From which he forever escaped to the thought
Doubt could reach not. . . . "I love her, and all else is naught!"

VIII.

His hand trembled strangely in breaking the seal
Of the letter which reached him at last from Lucile.
At the sight of the very first word that he read,
That letter dropped down from his hand like the dead
Leaf in autumn, that, falling, leaves naked and bare
A desolate tree in a wide wintry air.
He passed his hand hurriedly over his eyes,
Bewildered, incredulous. Angry surprise
And dismay, in one sharp moan, broke from him. Anon
He picked up the page, and read rapidly on.

IX.

The COMTESSE DE NEVERS *to* LORD ALFRED VARGRAVE.

"No, Alfred!
"If over the present, when last
We two met, rose the glamour and mist of the past,
It hath now rolled away, and our two paths are plain,
And those two paths divide us.
"That hand which again
Mine one moment has clasped as the hand of a brother,
That hand and your honor are pledged to another!
Forgive, Alfred Vargrave, forgive me, if yet
For that moment (now past!) I have made you forget
What was due to yourself and that other one. Yes,
Mine the fault, and be mine the repentance! Not less,
In now owning this fault, Alfred, let me own, too,
I foresaw not the sorrow involved in it.
"True,
That meeting, which hath been so fatal, I sought,
I alone! But O, deem not it was with the thought
Or your heart to regain, or the past to rewaken.
No! believe me, it was with the firm and unshaken
Conviction, at least, that our meeting would be
Without peril to *you*, although haply to me
The salvation of all my existence.
"I own,
When the rumor first reached me, which lightly made known
To the world your engagement, my heart and my mind
Suffered torture intense. It was cruel to find
That so much of the life of my life, half unknown
To myself, had been silently settled on one
Upon whom but to think it would soon be a crime.
Then I said to myself, 'From the thraldom which time
Hath not weakened there rests but one hope of escape.
That image which Fancy seems ever to shape
From the solitude left round the ruins of yore
Is a phantom. The Being I loved is no more.

What I hear in the silence, and see in the lone
Void of life, is the young hero born of my own
Perished youth: and his image, serene and sublime,
In my heart rests unconscious of change and of time.
Could I see it but once more, as time and as change
Have made it, a thing unfamiliar and strange,
See, indeed, that the Being I loved in my youth
Is no more, and what rests now is only, in truth,
The hard pupil of life and the world: then, O, then,
I should wake from a dream, and my life be again
Reconciled to the world; and, released from regret,
Take the lot fate accords to my choice.'
"So we met.
But the danger I did not foresee has occurred:
The danger, alas, to yourself! I have erred.
But happy for both that this error hath been
Discovered as soon as the danger was seen!
We meet, Alfred Vargrave, no more. I, indeed,
Shall be far from Serchon when this letter you read.
My course is decided; my path I discern:
Doubt is over; my future is fixed now.
"Return,
O return to the young living love! Whence, alas!
If, one moment, you wandered, think only it was
More deeply to bury the past love.
"And, oh!
Believe, Alfred Vargrave, that I, where I go
On my far distant pathway through life, shall rejoice
To treasure in memory all that your voice
Has avowed to me, all in which others have clothed
To my fancy with beauty and worth your betrothed!
In the fair morning light, in the orient dew
Of that young life, now yours, can you fail to renew
All the noble and pure aspirations, the truth,
The freshness, the faith, of your own earnest youth?
Yes! *you* will be happy. I, too, in the bliss
I foresee for you, I shall be happy. And this
Proves me worthy your friendship. And so — let it prove
That I cannot — I do not — respond to your love.
Yes, indeed! be convinced that I could not (no, no,
Never, never!) have rendered you happy. And so,
Rest assured that, if false to the vows you have plighted,
You would have endured, when the first brief, excited
Emotion was o'er, not alone the remorse
Of honor, but also (to render it worse)
Disappointed affection.
"Yes, Alfred; you start!
But think! if the world was too much in your heart,
And too little in mine, when we parted ten years
Ere this last fatal meeting, that time (ay, and tears!)
Have but deepened the old demarcations which then
Placed our natures asunder; and we two again,
As we then were, would still have been strangely at strife.
In that self-independence which is to my life
Its necessity now, as it once was its pride,
Had our course through the world been henceforth side by side,
I should have revolted forever, and shocked,
Your respect for the world's plausibilities, mocked,
Without meaning to do so, and outraged, all those
Social creeds which you live by.
"Oh! do not suppose
That I blame you. Perhaps it is you that are right.
Best, then, all as it is!
"Deem these words life's Good-night

To the hope of a moment: no more!
If there fell
Any tear on this page, 't was a friend's.
"So farewell
To the past — and to you, Alfred Vargrave.
"LUCILE."

X.

So ended that letter.
The room seemed to reel
Round and round in the mist that was scorching his eyes
With a fiery dew. Grief, resentment, surprise,
Half choked him; each word he had read, as it smote
Down some hope, rose and grasped like a hand at his throat,
To stifle and strangle him.
Gasping already
For relief from himself, with a footstep unsteady,
He passed from his chamber. He felt both oppressed
And excited. The letter he thrust in his breast,
And, in search of fresh air and of solitude, passed
The long lime-trees of Serchon. His footsteps at last
Reached a bare narrow heath by the skirts of a wood:
It was sombre and silent, and suited his mood.
By a mineral spring, long unused, now unknown,
Stood a small ruined abbey. He reached it, sat down
On a fragment of stone, 'mid the wild weed and thistle,
And read over again that perplexing epistle.

XI.

In re-reading that letter, there rolled from his mind
The raw mist of resentment which first made him blind
To the pathos breathed through it. Tears rose in his eyes,
And a hope sweet and strange in his heart seemed to rise.
The truth which he saw not the first time he read
That letter, he now saw, — that each word betrayed
The love which the writer had sought to conceal.
His love was received not, he could not but feel,
For one reason alone, — that his love was not free.
True! free yet he was not: but could he not be
Free erelong, free as air to revoke that farewell,
And to sanction his own hopes? he had but to tell
The truth to Matilda, and she were the first
To release him: he had but to wait at the worst.
Matilda's relations would probably snatch
Any pretext, with pleasure, to break off a match
In which they had yielded, alone at the whim
Of their spoiled child, a languid approval to him.
She herself, careless child! was her love for him aught
Save the first joyous fancy succeeding the thought
She last gave to her doll? was she able to feel
Such a love as the love he divined in Lucile?
He would seek her, obtain his release, and, oh! then,
He had but to fly to Lucile, and again
Claim the love which his heart would be free to command.
But to press on Lucile any claim to her hand,
Or even to seek, or to see her, before
He could say, "I am free! free, Lucile, to implore
That great blessing on life you alone can confer,"
'T were dishonor in him, 't would be insult to her.
Thus still with the letter outspread on his knee
He followed so fondly his own revery,
That he felt not the angry regard of a man
Fixed upon him; he saw not a face stern and wan
Turned towards him; he heard not a footstep that passed
And repassed the lone spot where he stood, till at last

A hoarse voice aroused him.
He looked up and saw,
On the bare heath before him, the Duc de Luvois.

XII.

With aggressive ironical tones, and a look
Of concentrated insolent challenge, the Duke
Addressed to Lord Alfred some sneering allusion
To "the doubtless sublime reveries his intrusion
Had, he feared, interrupted. Milord would do better,
He fancied, however, to fold up a letter
The writing of which was too well known, in fact,
His remark as he passed to have failed to attract."

XIII.

It was obvious to Alfred the Frenchman was bent
Upon picking a quarrel! and doubtless 't was meant
From *him* to provoke it by sneers such as these.
A moment sufficed his quick instinct to seize
The position. He felt that he could not expose
His own name, or Lucile's, or Matilda's, to those
Idle tongues that would bring down upon him the ban
Of the world, if he now were to fight with this man.
And indeed, when he looked in the Duke's haggard face,
He was pained by the change there he could not but trace.
And he almost felt pity.
He therefore put by
Each remark from the Duke with some careless reply,
And coldly, but courteously, waving away
The ill-humor the Duke seemed resolved to display,
Rose, and turned, with a stern salutation, aside.

XIV.

Then the Duke put himself in the path, made one stride
In advance, raised a hand, fixed upon him his eyes,
And said . . .
"Hold, Lord Alfred! Away with disguise!
I will own that I sought you a moment ago,
To fix on you a quarrel. I still can do so
Upon any excuse. I prefer to be frank.
I admit not a rival in fortune or rank
To the hand of a woman, whatever be hers
Or her suitor's. I love the Comtesse de Nevers.
I believed, ere you crossed me, and still have the right
To believe, that she would have been mine. To her sight
You return, and the woman is suddenly changed.
You step in between us: her heart is estranged.
You! who now are betrothed to another, I know:
You! whose name with Lucile's nearly ten years ago
Was coupled by ties which you broke: you! the man
I reproached on the day our acquaintance began:
You! that left her so lightly, — I cannot believe
That you love, as I love, her; nor can I conceive
You, indeed, have the right so to love her.
"Milord
I will not thus tamely concede, at your word,
What, a few days ago, I believed to be mine!
I shall yet persevere: I shall yet be, in fine,
A rival you dare not despise. It is plain
That to settle this contest there can but remain
One way — need I say what it is?"

XV.

Not unmoved
With regretful respect for the earnestness proved
By the speech he had heard, Alfred Vargrave replied
In words which he trusted might yet turn aside

The quarrel from which he felt bound to abstain,
And, with stately urbanity, strove to explain
To the Duke that he too (a fair rival at worst !)
Had not been accepted.

XVI.

"Accepted ! say first
Are you free to have offered ?"
Lord Alfred was mute.

XVII.

"Ah, you dare not reply !" cried the Duke. "Why dispute,
Why palter with me ? You are silent ! and why ?
Because, in your conscience, you cannot deny
'T was from vanity, wanton and cruel withal,
And the wish an ascendency lost to recall,
That you stepped in between me and her. If, milord,
You be really sincere, I ask only one word.
Say at once you renounce her. At once, on my part,
I will ask your forgiveness with all truth of heart,
And there *can* be no quarrel between us. Say on !"
Lord Alfred grew galled and impatient. This tone
Roused a strong irritation he could not repress.
"You have not the right, sir," he said, "and still less
The power, to make terms and conditions with me.
I refuse to reply."

XVIII.

As diviners may see
Fates they cannot avert in some figure occult,
He foresaw in a moment each evil result
Of the quarrel now imminent.
There, face to face,
'Mid the ruins and tombs of a long-perished race,
With, for witness, the stern Autumn Sky overhead,
And beneath them, unnoticed, the graves, and the dead,
Those two men had met, as it were on the ridge
Of that perilous, narrow, invisible bridge
Dividing the Past from the Future, so small
That, if one should pass over, the other must fall.

XIX.

On the ear, at that moment, the sound of a hoof,
Urged with speed, sharply smote ; and from under the roof
Of the forest in view, where the skirts of it verged
On the heath where they stood, at full gallop emerged
A horseman.
A guide he appeared, by the sash
Of red silk round the waist, and the long leathern lash
With the short wooden handle, slung crosswise behind
The short jacket ; the loose canvas trouser, confined
By the long boots ; the woollen capote ; and the rein,
A mere hempen cord on a curb.
Up the plain
He wheeled his horse, white with the foam on his flank,
Leaped the rivulet lightly, turned sharp from the bank,
And, approaching the Duke, raised his woollen capote,
Bowed low in the selle, and delivered a note.

XX.

The two stood astonished. The Duke, with a gest
Of apology, turned, stretched his hand, and possessed
Himself of the letter, changed color, and tore
The page open, and read.
Ere a moment was o'er
His whole aspect changed. A light rose to his eyes,
And a smile to his lips. While with startled surprise
Lord Alfred yet watched him, he turned on his heel,
And said gayly, "A pressing request from Lucile !

You are quite right, Lord Alfred ! fair rivals at worst,
Our relative place may perchance be reversed.
You are not accepted — nor free to propose !
I, perchance, am accepted already ; who knows ?
I had warned you, milord, I should still persevere.
This letter — but stay ! you can read it — look here !"

XXI.

It was now Alfred's turn to feel roused and enraged.
But Lucile to himself was not pledged or engaged
By aught that could sanction resentment. He said
Not a word, but turned round, took the letter, and read . . .

The COMTESSE DE NEVERS *to the* DUC DE LUVOIS.

"SAINT SAVIOUR.

"Your letter, which followed me here, makes me stay
Till I see you again. With no moment's delay
I entreat, I conjure you, by all that you feel
Or profess, to come to me directly.
"LUCILE."

XXII.

"Your letter !" He then had been writing to her !
Coldly shrugging his shoulders, Lord Alfred said, "Sir,
Do not let me detain you !"
The Duke smiled and bowed ;
Placed the note in his bosom ; addressed, half aloud,
A few words to the messenger : . . .
"Say your despatch
Will be answered ere nightfall" ; then glanced at his watch,
And turned back to the Baths.

XXIII.

Alfred Vargrave stood still,
Torn, distracted in heart, and divided in will.
He turned to Lucile's farewell letter to him,
And read over her words ; rising tears made them dim ;
"*Doubt is over : my future is fixed now*," they said,
"*My course is decided.*" Her course ? what ! to wed
With this insolent rival ! With that thought there shot
Through his heart an acute jealous anguish. But not
Even thus could his clear worldly sense quite excuse
Those strange words to the Duke. She was free to refuse
Himself, free the Duke to accept, it was true :
Even then, though, this eager and strange rendezvous
How imprudent ! To some unfrequented lone inn,
And so late (for the night was about to begin) —
She, companionless there ! — had she bidden that man ?
A fear, vague, and formless, and horrible, ran
Through his heart.

XXIV.

At that moment he looked up, and saw,
Riding fast through the forest, the Duc de Luvois,
Who waved his hand to him, and sped out of sight.
The day was descending. He felt 'twould be night
Ere that man reached Saint Saviour.

XXV.

He walked on, but not
Back toward Serchon : he walked on, but knew not in what
Direction, nor yet with what object, indeed,
He was walking ; but still he walked on without heed.

XXVI.

The day had been sullen ; but, towards his decline,
The sun sent a stream of wild light up the pine.
Darkly denting the red light revealed at its back,
The old ruined abbey rose roofless and black.

The spring that yet oozed through the moss-paven floor
Had suggested, no doubt, to the monks there, of yore,
The site of that refuge where, back to its God
How many a heart, now at rest 'neath the sod,
Had borne from the world all the same wild unrest
That now preyed on his own!

XXVII.

By the thoughts in his breast
With varying impulse divided and torn,
He traversed the scant heath, and reached the forlorn
Autumn woodland, in which but a short while ago
He had seen the Duke rapidly enter; and so
He too entered. The light waned around him, and passed
Into darkness. The wrathful, red Occident cast
One glare of vindictive inquiry behind,
As the last light of day from the high wood declined,
And the great forest sighed its farewell to the beam,
And far off on the stillness the voice of the stream
Fell faintly.

XXVIII.

O Nature, how fair is thy face,
And how light is thy heart, and how friendless thy grace!
Thou false mistress of man! thou dost sport with him lightly
In his hours of ease and enjoyment; and brightly
Dost thou smile to his smile; to his joys thou inclinest,
But his sorrows, thou knowest them not, nor divinest.
While he woos, thou art wanton; thou lettest him love thee;
But thou art not his friend, for his grief cannot move thee;
And at last, when he sickens and dies, what dost thou?
All as gay are thy garments, as careless thy brow,
And thou laughest and toyest with any new comer,
Not a tear more for winter, a smile less for summer!
Hast thou never an anguish to heave the heart under
That fair breast of thine, O thou feminine wonder!
For all those — the young, and the fair, and the strong,
Who have loved thee, and lived with thee gayly and long,
And who now on thy bosom lie dead? and their deeds
And their days are forgotten! O, hast thou no weeds
And not one year of mourning, — one out of the many
That deck thy new bridals forever, — nor any
Regrets for thy lost loves, concealed from the new,
O thou widow of earth's generations? Go to!
If the sea and the night wind know aught of these things,
They do not reveal it. We are not thy kings.

CANTO VI.

I.

"The huntsman has ridden too far on the chase,
And eldrich, and eerie, and strange is the place!
The castle betokens a date long gone by.
He crosses the court-yard with curious eye:
He wanders from chamber to chamber, and yet
From strangeness to strangeness his footsteps are set;
And the whole place grows wilder and wilder, and less
Like aught seen before. Each in obsolete dress,
Strange portraits regard him with looks of surprise,
Strange forms from the arras start forth to his eyes;
Strange epigraphs, blazoned, burn out of the wall:
The spell of a wizard is over it all.
In her chamber, enchanted, the Princess is sleeping

The sleep which for centuries she has been keeping.
If she smile in her sleep, it must be to some lover
Whose lost golden locks the long grasses now cover:
If she moan in her dream, it must be to deplore
Some grief which the world cares to hear of no more.
But how fair is her forehead, how calm seems her cheek!
And how sweet must that voice be, if once she would speak!
He looks and he loves her; but knows he (not he!)
The clew to unravel this old mystery?
And he stoops to those shut lips. The shapes on the wall,
The mute men in armor around him, and all
The weird figures frown, as though striving to say,
'Halt! invade not the Past, reckless child of To-day!
And give not, O madman! the heart in thy breast
To a phantom, the soul of whose sense is possessed
By an Age not thine own!'
"But unconscious is he,
And he heeds not the warning, he cares not to see
Aught but *one* form before him!
"Rash, wild words are o'er;
And the vision is vanished from sight evermore!
And the gray morning sees, as it drearily moves
O'er a land long deserted, a madman that roves
Through a ruin, and seeks to recapture a dream.
Lost to life and its uses, withdrawn from the scheme
Of man's waking existence, he wanders apart."
And this is an old fairy-tale of the heart.
It is told in all lands, in a different tongue;
Told with tears by the old, heard with smiles by the young.
And the tale to each heart unto which it is known
Has a different sense. It has puzzled my own.

II.

Eugène de Luvois was a man who, in part
From strong physical health, and that vigor of heart
Which physical health gives, and partly, perchance,
From a generous vanity native to France,
With the heart of a hunter, whatever the quarry,
Pursued it, too hotly impatient to tarry
Or turn, till he took it. His trophies were trifles:
But trifler he was not. When rose-leaves it rifles,
No less than when oak-trees it ruins, the wind
Its pleasure pursues with impetuous mind.
Both Eugène de Luvois and Lord Alfred had been
Men of pleasure: but men's pleasant vices, which, seen
Floating faint, in the sunshine of Alfred's soft mood,
Seemed amiable foibles, by Luvois pursued
With impetuous passion, seemed semi-Satanic.
Half pleased you see brooks play with pebbles; in panic
You watch them whirled down by the torrent.
In truth,
To the sacred political creed of his youth
The century which he was born to denied
All realization. Its generous pride
To degenerate protest on all things was sunk;
Its principles each to a prejudice shrunk.
Down the path of a life that led nowhere he trod,
Where his whims were his guides, and his will was his god,
And his pastime his purpose.
From boyhood possessed
Of inherited wealth, he had learned to invest
Both his wealth and those passions wealth frees from the cage
Which penury locks, in each vice of an age
All the virtues of which, by the creed he revered,
Were to him illegitimate.
Thus, he appeared