

To the woman that bears it a twofold respect.

Answer, Duc de Luvois! Did Lucile then reject

The proffer you made of your hand and your name?

Or did you on her love then relinquish a claim

Urged before? I ask bluntly this question, because

My title to do so is clear by the laws That all gentlemen honor. Make only one sign

That you know of Lucile de Neversought, in fine,

For which, if your own virgin sister were by,

From Lucile you would shield her acquaintance, and I

And Matilda leave Ems on the morrow.

XXXI.

The Duke Hesitated and paused. He could tell, by the look

Of the man at his side, that he meant what he said,

And there flashed in a moment these thoughts through his head:

"Leave Ems! would that suit me? no! that were again

To mar all. And besides, if I do not explain,

She herself will . . . *et puis, il a raison; on est*

Gentilhomme avant tout!" He replied therefore,

"Nay! Madame de Nevers had rejected me. I, in those days, I was mad; and in some mad reply

I threatened the life of the rival to whom That rejection was due, I was led to presume.

She feared for his life; and the letter which then

She wrote me, I showed you; we met: and again

My hand was refused, and my love was denied,

And the glance you mistook was the vizard which Pride

Lends to Humiliation.

"And so," half in jest,

He went on, "in this best world, 'tis all for the best;

You are wedded, (blessed Englishman!) wedded to one

Whose past can be called into question by none:

And I (fickle Frenchman!) can still laugh to feel

I am lord of myself, and the Mode: and Lucile

Still shines from her pedestal, frigid and fair

As yon German moon o'er the linden-tops there!

A Dian in marble that scorns any troth. With the little love-gods, whom I thank for us both,

While she smiles from her lonely Olympus apart,

That her arrows are marble as well as her heart.

Stay at Ems, Alfred Vargrave!"

XXXII.

The Duke, with a smile, Turned and entered the Rooms which,

thus talking, meanwhile, They had reached.

XXXIII.

Alfred Vargrave strode on (overthrown Heart and mind!) in the darkness bewildered, alone:

"And so," to himself did he mutter, "and so

'T was to rescue my life, gentle spirit! and, oh,

For this did I doubt her? . . . a light word — a look —

The mistake of a moment! . . . for this I forsook —

For this? Pardon, pardon, Lucile! O Lucile!"

Thought and memory rang, like a funeral peal,

Weary changes on one dirge-like note through his brain,

As he strayed down the darkness.

XXXIV.

Re-entering again The Casino, the Duke smiled. He turned to roulette,

And sat down, and played fast, and lost largely, and yet

He still smiled: night deepened: he played his last number:

Went home: and soon slept: and still smiled in his slumber.

XXXV.

In his desolate Maxims, La Rochefoucauld wrote,

"In the grief or mischance of a friend you may note,

There is something which always gives pleasure."

Alas!

That reflection fell short of the truth as it was.

La Rochefoucauld might have as truly set down, —

"No misfortune, but what some one turns to his own

Advantage its mischief: no sorrow, but of it

There ever is somebody ready to profit: No affliction without its stock-jobbers, who all

Gamble, speculate, play on the rise and the fall

Of another man's heart, and make traffic in it."

Burn thy book, O La Rochefoucauld! Fool! one man's wit

All men's selfishness how should it fathom?

O sage,

Dost thou satirize Nature? She laughs at thy page.

CANTO II.

I.

COUSIN JOHN to COUSIN ALFRED.

"LONDON, 18—.

"MY DEAR ALFRED:

Your last letters put me in pain. This contempt of existence, this listless disdain

Of your own life, — its joys and its duties, — the deuce

Take my wits if they find for it half an excuse!

I wish that some Frenchman would shoot off your leg,

And compel you to stump through the world on a peg.

I wish that you had, like myself, (more's the pity!)

To sit seven hours on this cursed committee.

I wish that you knew, sir, how salt is the bread

Of another — (what is it that Dante has said?)

And the trouble of other men's stairs. In a word,

I wish fate had some real affliction conferred

On your whimsical self, that, at least, you had cause

For neglecting life's duties, and damning its laws!

This pressure against all the purpose of life,

This self-ebullition, and ferment, and strife,

Betokened, I grant that it may be in truth,

The richness and strength of the new wine of youth.

But if, when the wine should have mel- lowed with time,

Being bottled and binned, to a flavor sublime

It retains the same acrid, incongruous taste,

Why, the sooner to throw it away that we haste

The better, I take it. And this vice of snarling,

Self-love's little lapdog, the overfed dar- ling

Of a hypochondriacal fancy appears, To my thinking, at least, in a man of your years,

At the midnight of manhood with plenty to do,

And every incentive for doing it too, — With the duties of life just sufficiently pressing

For prayer, and of joys more than most men for blessing;

With a pretty young wife, and a pretty full purse, —

Like poltroonery, puerile truly, or worse! I wish I could get you at least to agree

To take life as it is, and consider with me, If it be not all smiles, that it is not all sneers;

It admits honest laughter, and needs honest tears.

Do you think none have known but yourself all the pain

Of hopes that retreat, and regrets that remain?

And all the wide distance fate fixes, no doubt,

'Twixt the life that's within, and the life that's without?

What one of us finds the world just as he likes?
 Or gets what he wants when he wants it? Or strikes
 Without missing the thing that he strikes at the first?
 Or walks without stumbling? Or quenches his thirst
 At one draught? Bah! I tell you! I, bachelor John,
 Have had griefs of my own. But what then? I push on
 All the faster perchance that I yet feel the pain
 Of my last fall, albeit I may stumble again.
 God means every man to be happy, be sure.
 He sends us no sorrows that have not some cure.
 Our duty down here is to do, not to know.
 Live as though life were earnest, and life will be so.
 Let each moment, like Time's last ambassador, come:
 It will wait to deliver its message; and some
 Sort of answer it merits. It is not the deed
 A man does, but the way that he does it, should plead
 For the man's compensation in doing it.
 "Here,
 My next neighbor's a man with twelve thousand a year,
 Who deems that life has not a pastime more pleasant
 Than to follow a fox or to slaughter a pheasant.
 Yet this fellow goes through a contested election,
 Lives in London, and sits, like the soul of dejection,
 All the day through upon a committee, and late
 To the last, every night, through the dreary debate,
 As though he were getting each speaker by heart,
 Though amongst them he never presumes to take part.
 One asks himself why, without murmur or question,
 He foregoes all his tastes, and destroys his digestion,
 For a labor of which the result seems so small.

"The man is ambitious," you say. Not at all.
 He has just sense enough to be fully aware
 That he never can hope to be Premier, or share
 The renown of a Tully;—or even to hold
 A subordinate office. He is not so bold
 As to fancy the House for ten minutes would bear
 With patience his modest opinions to hear.
 "But he wants something!"
 "What! with twelve thousand a year?
 What could Government give him would be half so dear
 To his heart as a walk with a dog and a gun
 Through his own pheasant woods, or a capital run?"
 "No; but vanity fills out the emptiest brain;
 The man would be more than his neighbors, 't is plain;
 And the drudgery drearily gone through in town
 Is more than repaid by provincial renown.
 Enough if some Marchioness, lively and loose,
 Shall have eyed him with passing complaisance; the goose,
 If the Fashion to him open one of its doors,
 As proud as a sultan, returns to his boors."
 Wrong again! if you think so.
 "For, *primo*; my friend
 Is the head of a family known from one end
 Of his shire to the other, as the oldest; and therefore
 He despises fine lords and fine ladies.
 He care for
 A peerage? no, truly! *Secondo*; he rarely
 Or never goes out: dines at Bellamy's sparsely,
 And abhors what you call the gay world.
 "Then, I ask,
 What inspires, and consoles, such a self-imposed task
 As the life of this man, — but the sense of its duty?
 And I swear that the eyes of the haughtiest beauty

Have never inspired in my soul that intense,
 Reverential, and loving, and absolute sense
 Of heartfelt admiration I feel for this man,
 As I see him beside me; — there, wearing the wan
 London daylight away, on his humdrum committee;
 So unconscious of all that awakens my pity,
 And wonder — and worship, I might say.
 "To me
 There seems something nobler than genius to be
 In that dull patient labor no genius relieves,
 That absence of all joy which yet never grieves;
 The humility of it! the grandeur withal!
 The sublimity of it! And yet, should you call
 The man's own very slow apprehension to this,
 He would ask, with a stare, what sublimity is!
 His work is the duty to which he was born;
 He accepts it, without ostentation or scorn:
 And this man is no uncommon type (I thank Heaven!)
 Of this land's common men. In all other lands, even
 The type's self is wanting. Perchance, 't is the reason
 That Government oscillates ever 'twixt treason
 And tyranny elsewhere.
 "I wander away
 Too far, though, from what I was wishing to say.
 You, for instance, read Plato. You know that the soul
 Is immortal; and put this in rhyme, on the whole,
 Very well, with sublime illustration. Man's heart
 Is a mystery, doubtless. You trace it in art: —
 The Greek Psyche, — that's beauty, — the perfect ideal.
 But then comes the imperfect, perfectible real,
 With its pained aspiration and strife. In those pale
 Ill-drawn virgins of Giotto you see it prevail.
 You have studied all this. Then, the universe, too,
 Is not a mere house to be lived in, for you.
 Geology opens the mind. So you know
 Something also of strata and fossils; these show
 The bases of cosmical structure: some mention
 Of the nebulous theory demands your attention;
 And so on.
 "In short, it is clear the interior
 Of your brain, my dear Alfred, is vastly superior
 In fibre, and fulness, and function, and fire,
 To that of my poor parliamentary squire;
 But your life leaves upon me (forgive me this heat
 Due to friendship) the sense of a thing incomplete.
 You fly high. But what is it, in truth, you fly at?
 My mind is not satisfied quite as to that.
 An old illustration's as good as a new,
 Provided the old illustration be true.
 We are children. Mere kites are the fancies we fly,
 Though we marvel to see them ascending so high;
 Things slight in themselves, — long-tailed toys, and no more.
 What is it that makes the kite steadily soar
 Through the realms where the cloud and the whirlwind have birth
 But the tie that attaches the kite to the earth?
 I remember the lessons of childhood, you see,
 And the hornbook I learned on my poor mother's knee.
 In truth, I suspect little else do we learn
 From this great book of life, which so shrewdly we turn,
 Saving how to apply, with a good or bad grace,
 What we learned in the hornbook of childhood.
 "Your case
 Is exactly in point.
 "Fly your kite, if you please,
 Out of sight: let it go where it will, on the breeze;

But cut not the one thread by which it is bound,
 Be it never so high, to this poor human ground.
 No man is the absolute lord of his life.
 You, my friend, have a home, and a sweet and dear wife.
 If I often have sighed by my own silent fire,
 With the sense of a sometimes recurring desire
 For a voice sweet and low, or a face fond and fair,
 Some dull winter evening to solace and share
 With the love which the world its good children allows
 To shake hands with, — in short, a legitimate spouse,
 This thought has consoled me: "At least I have given
 For my own good behavior no hostage to heaven."
 You have, though. Forget it not! faith, if you do,
 I would rather break stones on a road than be you.
 If any man wilfully injured, or led
 That little girl wrong, I would sit on his head,
 Even though you yourself were the sinner!
 "And this
 Leads me back (do not take it, dear cousin, amiss!)
 To the matter I meant to have mentioned at once,
 But these thoughts put it out of my head for the nonce.
 Of all the preposterous humbugs and shams,
 Of all the old wolves ever taken for lambs,
 The wolf best received by the flock he devours
 Is that uncle-in-law, my dear Alfred, of yours.
 At least, this has long been my settled conviction,
 And I almost would venture at once the prediction
 That before very long — but no matter! I trust
 For his sake and our own, that I may be unjust.
 But Heaven forgive me, if cautious I am on

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

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

II.

This is just the advice I myself would have given
 To Lord Alfred, had I been his cousin, which, Heaven
 Be praised, I am not. But it reached him indeed
 In an unlucky hour, and received little heed.
 A half-languid glance was the most that he lent at
 That time to these homilies. *Primum dementat*
Quem Deus vult perdere. Alfred in fact
 Was behaving just then in a way to distract
 Job's self had Job known him. The more you'd have thought
 The Duke's court to Matilda his eye would have caught,
 The more did his aspect grow listless to hers,
 And the more did it beam to Lucile de Nevers.
 And Matilda, the less she found love in the look
 Of her husband, the less did she shrink from the Duke.
 With each day that passed o'er them, they each, heart from heart,
 Woke to feel themselves further and further apart.
 More and more of his time Alfred passed at the table;
 Played high; and lost more than to lose he was able.

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

III.

In that garden, an arbor, withdrawn from the sun,
 By laburnum and lilac with blooms over-run,
 Formed a vault of cool verdure, which made, when the heat
 Of the noontide hung heavy, a gracious retreat.
 And here, with some friends of their own little world,
 In the warm afternoons, till the shadows uncurred
 From the feet of the lindens, and crept through the grass,
 Their blue hours would this gay little colony pass.

The men loved to smoke, and the women
to bring,
Undeterred by tobacco, their work there,
and sing
Or converse, till the dew fell, and home-
ward the bee
Floated, heavy with honey. Towards
eve there was tea
(A luxury due to Matilda), and ice,
Fruit, and coffee. *Ὁ Ἑσπερε, πάντα
φέρεις!*
Such an evening it was, while Matilda
presided
O'er the rustic arrangements thus daily
provided,
With the Duke, and a small German
Prince with a thick head,
And an old Russian Countess both witty
and wicked,
And two Austrian Colonels, — that Al-
fred, who yet
Was lounging alone with his last cigar-
ette,
Saw Lucile de Nevers by herself pacing
slow
'Neath the shade of the cool linden-trees
to and fro,
And joining her, cried, "Thank the good
stars, we meet!"
I have so much to say to you!"
"Yes? . . ." with her sweet
Serene voice, she replied to him . . .
"Yes? and I too
Was wishing, indeed, to say somewhat
to you."
She was paler just then than her wont
was. The sound
Of her voice had within it a sadness pro-
found.
"You are ill?" he exclaimed.
"No!" she hurriedly said,
"No, no!"
"You alarm me!"
She dropped down her head.
"If your thoughts have of late sought,
or cared, to divine
The purpose of what has been passing in
mine,
My farewell can scarcely alarm you."

ALFRED.

Your farewell! you go!

LUCILE.

Yes, Lord Alfred.

ALFRED. Reveal
The cause of this sudden unkindness.

LUCILE.

Unkind?

ALFRED.

Yes! what else is this parting?

LUCILE.

No, no! are you blind?

Look into your own heart and home.

Can you see

No reason for this, save unkindness in
me?Look into the eyes of your wife, — those
true eyesToo pure and too honest in aught to dis-
guise

The sweet soul shining through them.

ALFRED.

Lucile! (first and last
Be the word, if you will!) let me speak
of the past.I know now, alas! though I know it too
late,What passed at that meeting which
settled my fate.Nay, nay, interrupt me not yet! let it
be!I but say what is due to yourself, — due
to me,

And must say it.

He rushed incoherently on,
Describing how, lately, the truth he had
known,To explain how, and whence, he had
wronged her before,All the complicate coil wound about him
of yore.All the hopes that had flown with the
faith that was fled,"And then, O Lucile, what was left me,"
he said,"When my life was defrauded of you,
but to takeThat life, as 't was left, and endeavor to
makeUnobserved by another, the void which
remainedUnconcealed to myself? If I have not
attained,I have striven. One word of unkindness
has never

Passed my lips to Matilda. Her least
wish has ever
Received my submission. And if, of a
truth,
I have failed to renew what I felt in my
youth,
I at least have been loyal to what I do
feel,
Respect, duty, honor, affection. Lucile,
I speak not of love now, nor love's long
regret:
I would not offend you, nor dare I for-
get
The ties that are round me. But may
there not be
A friendship yet hallowed between you
and me?
May we not be yet friends, — friends the
dearest?"

"Alas!"

She replied, "for one moment, perchance,
did it passThrough my own heart, that dream
which forever hath broughtTo those who indulge it in innocent
thoughtSo fatal and evil a waking! But no.
For in lives such as ours are, the Dream-
tree would growOn the borders of Hades: beyond it,
what lies?The wheel of Ixion, alas! and the cries
Of the lost and tormented. Departed,
for us,Are the days when with innocence we
could discussDreams like these. Fled, indeed, are
the dreams of my life!O trust me, the best friend you have is
your wife.And I, — in that pure child's pure virtue,
I bowTo the beauty of virtue. I felt on my
browNot one blush when I first took her
hand. With no blushShall I clasp it to-night, when I leave
you.

"Hush! hush!"

I would say what I wished to have said
when you came.Do not think that years leave us and
find us the same!The woman you knew long ago, long
ago,Is no more. You yourself have within
you, I know,

The germ of a joy in the years yet to be,
Whereby the past years will bear fruit.
As for me,
I go my own way, — onward, upward!
"O yet,
Let me thank you for that which en-
nobled regret,
When it came, as it beautified hope ere
it fled, —
The love I once felt for you. True, it
is dead,
But it is not corrupted. I too have at
last
Lived to learn that love is not — (such
love as is past,
Such love as youth dreams of at least) —
the sole part
Of life, which is able to fill up the heart;
Even that of a woman.

"Between you and me
Heaven fixes a gulf, over which you
must seeThat our guardian angels can bear us
no more.We each of us stand on an opposite shore.
Trust a woman's opinion for once. Wom-
en learn,By an instinct men never attain, to dis-
cernEach other's true natures. Matilda is
fair,Matilda is young — see her now, sitting
there! —How tenderly fashioned — (O, is she not?
say,)

To love and be loved!"

IV.

He turned sharply away, —

"Matilda is young, and Matilda is fair;
Of all that you tell me pray deem me
aware;But Matilda's a statue, Matilda's a child;
Matilda loves not —"Lucile quietly smiled
As she answered him: — "Yesterday,
all that you sayMight be true; it is false, wholly false,
though, to-day."

"How? — what mean you?"

"I mean that to-day," she replied,
"The statue with life has become vivi-
fied:I mean that the child to a woman has
grown:

And that woman is jealous."

"What! she?" with a tone

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

"My lord, you deceive yourself; no one
 but you
 Is she jealous of. Trust me. And thank
 Heaven, too,
 That so lately this passion within her
 hath grown.
 For who shall declare, if for months she
 had known
 What for days she has known all too
 keenly, I fear,
 That knowledge perchance might have
 cost you more dear?"

"Explain! explain, madam!" he cried
 in surprise;
 And terror and anger enkindled his eyes.

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

"Speak out!"

He gasped with emotion. "Lucile!
 you mean — what?"
 Do you doubt her fidelity?"

"Certainly not.
 Listen to me, my friend. What I wish
 to explain
 Is so hard to shape forth. I could al-
 most refrain
 From touching a subject so fragile.
 However,
 Bear with me awhile, if I frankly en-
 deavor
 To invade for one moment your inner-
 most life.
 Your honor, Lord Alfred, and that of
 your wife,
 Are dear to me, — most dear! And I
 am convinced
 That you rashly are risking that honor."
 He winced,
 And turned pale, as she spoke.
 She had aimed at his heart,
 And she saw, by his sudden and terrified
 start,
 That her aim had not missed.

"Stay, Lucile!" he exclaimed,
 "What in truth do you mean by these
 words, vaguely framed
 To alarm me? Matilda? — My wife? —
 do you know?" —

"I know that your wife is as spotless
 as snow.
 But I know not how far your continued
 neglect
 Her nature, as well as her heart, might
 affect.
 Till at last, by degrees, that serene at-
 mosphere
 Of her unconscious purity, faint and
 yet clear,
 Like the indistinct golden and vaporous
 fleece
 Which surrounded and hid the celestials
 in Greece
 From the glances of men, would disperse
 and depart
 At the sighs of a sick and delirious
 heart, —
 For jealousy is to a woman, be sure,
 A disease healed too oft by a criminal
 cure;
 And the heart left too long to its ravage,
 in time
 May find weakness in virtue, reprisal
 in crime."

v.

"Such thoughts could have never," he
 faltered, "I know,
 Reached the heart of Matilda."

"Matilda? O no!
 But reflect! when such thoughts do not
 come of themselves
 To the heart of a woman neglected, like
 elves
 That seek lonely places, — there rarely
 is wanting
 Some voice at her side, with an evil en-
 chanting
 To conjure them to her."

"O lady, beware!"

At this moment, around me I search
 everywhere
 For a clue to your words" —
 "You mistake them," she said,
 Half fearing, indeed, the effect they had
 made.
 "I was putting a mere hypothetical case."

With a long look of trouble he gazed in
 her face.
 "Woe to him, . . ." he exclaimed . . .
 "woe to him that shall feel
 Such a hope! for I swear, if he did but
 reveal
 One glimpse, — it should be the last
 hope of his life!"

The clenched hand and bent eyebrow
 betokened the strife
 She had roused in his heart.
 "You forget," she began,
 "That you menace yourself. You your-
 self are the man
 That is guilty. Alas! must it ever be so?
 Do we stand in our own light, wherever
 we go,
 And fight our own shadows forever? O
 think!
 The trial from which you, the stronger
 ones, shrink,
 You ask woman, the weaker one, still
 to endure;
 You bid her be true to the laws you
 abjure;
 To abide by the ties you yourselves rend
 asunder,
 With the force that has failed you; and
 that too, when under
 The assumption of rights which to her
 you refuse,
 The immunity claimed for yourselves
 you abuse!
 Where the contract exists, it involves
 obligation
 To both husband and wife, in an equal
 relation.
 You unloose, in asserting your own lib-
 erty,
 A knot, which, unloosed, leaves another
 as free.
 Then, O Alfred! be juster at heart:
 and thank Heaven
 That Heaven to your wife such a nature
 has given
 That you have not wherewith to reproach
 her, albeit
 You have cause to reproach your own
 self, could you see it!"

vi.

In the silence that followed the last
 word she said,
 In the heave of his chest, and the droop
 of his head,
 Poor Lucile marked her words had suf-
 ficed to impart
 A new germ of motion and life to that
 heart
 Of which he himself had so recently
 spoken
 As dead to emotion, — exhausted, or
 broken!
 New fears would awaken new hopes in
 his life.

In the husband indifferent no more to
 the wife
 She already, as she had foreseen, could
 discover
 That Matilda had gained, at her hands,
 a new lover.
 So after some moments of silence, whose
 spell
 They both felt, she extended her hand
 to him. . . .

vii.
 "Well?"

viii.

"Lucile," he replied, as that soft quiet
 hand
 In his own he clasped warmly, "I both
 understand
 And obey you."
 "Thank Heaven!" she murmured.
 "O yet,
 One word, I beseech you! I cannot
 forget,"
 He exclaimed, "we are parting for life.
 You have shown
 My pathway to me: but say, what is
 your own?"
 The calmness with which until then she
 had spoken
 In a moment seemed strangely and sud-
 denly broken.
 She turned from him nervously, hur-
 riedly.

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

IX.

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

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

X.

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

CANTO III.

I.

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

II.

In the group seen so lately in sunlight
assembled,
Mid those walks over which the labour-
num-bough trembled,
And the deep-bosomed lilac, empara-
dising
The haunts where the blackbird and
thrush flit and sing,
The keenest eye could but have seen,
and seen only,
A circle of friends, minded not to leave
lonely
The bird on the bough, or the bee on
the blossom ;
Conversing at ease in the garden's green
bosom,
Like those who, when Florence was yet
in her glories,
Cheated death and killed time with
Boccaccian stories.
But at length the long twilight more
deeply grew shaded,
And the fair night the rosy horizon
invaded.
And the bee in the blossom, the bird on
the bough,
Through the shadowy garden were slum-
bering now.
The trees only, o'er every unvisited walk,
Began on a sudden to whisper and talk.
And, as each little sprightly and garru-
lous leaf
Woke up with an evident sense of relief,
They all seemed to be saying . . . "Once
more we're alone,
And, thank Heaven, those tiresome peo-
ple are gone !"

III.

Through the deep blue concave of the
luminous air,
Large, loving, and languid, the stars
here and there,
Like the eyes of shy passionate women,
looked down
O'er the dim world whose sole tender
light was their own,
When Matilda, alone, from her chamber
descended,
And entered the garden, unseen, unat-
tended.
Her forehead was aching and parched,
and her breast
By a vague inexpressible sadness op-
pressed ;

A sadness which led her, she scarcely
knew how,
And she scarcely knew why . . . (save,
indeed, that just now
The house, out of which with a gasp she
had fled
Half-stifled, seemed ready to sink on
her head) . . .
Out into the night air, the silence, the
bright
Boundless starlight, the cool isolation
of night !
Her husband that day had looked once
in her face,
And pressed both her hands in a silent
embrace,
And reproachfully noticed her recent
dejection
With a smile of kind wonder and tacit
affection.
He, of late so indifferent and listless !
. . . at last
Was he startled and awed by the change
which had passed
O'er the once radiant face of his young
wife ? Whence came
That long look of solicitous fondness ?
. . . the same
Look and language of quiet affection, —
the look
And the language, alas ! which so often
she took
For pure love in the simple repose of its
purity, —
Her own heart thus lulled to a fatal
security !
Ha ! would he deceive her again by this
kindness ?
Had she been, then, O fool ! in her in-
nocent blindness
The sport of transparent illusion ? ah,
folly !
And that feeling, so tranquil, so happy,
so holy,
She had taken, till then, in the heart,
not alone
Of her husband, but also, indeed, in
her own,
For true love, nothing else, after all,
did it prove
But a friendship profanely familiar ?
"And love ? . . .
What was love, then ? . . . not calm,
not secure, — scarcely kind !
But in one, all intensest emotions com-
bined :
Life and death : pain and rapture."

Thus wandering astray,
Led by doubt, through the darkness she
wandered away.
All silently crossing, recrossing the night,
With faint, meteoric, miraculous light,
The swift-shooting stars through the
infinite burned,
And into the infinite ever returned.
And silently o'er the obscure and un-
known
In the heart of Matilda there darted and
shone
Thoughts, enkindling like meteors the
deeps, to expire,
Leaving traces behind them of tremulous
fire.

IV.

She entered that arbor of lilacs, in
which
The dark air with odors hung heavy and
rich,
Like a soul that grows faint with desire.
'T was the place
In which she so lately had sat, face to
face
With her husband, — and her, the pale
stranger detested,
Whose presence her heart like a plague
had infested.
The whole spot with evil remembrance
was haunted.
Through the darkness there rose on the
heart which it daunted
Each dreary detail of that desolate day,
So full, and yet so incomplete. Far
away
The acacias were muttering, like mis-
chievous elves,
The whole story over again to them-
selves,
Each word, — and each word was a
wound ! By degrees
Her memory mingled its voice with the
trees.

V.

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