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|    English Poetry III: From Tennyson to Whitman.The Harvard Classics.  1909–14. |
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|   |
| THIS is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks, |  |
| Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight, |  |
| Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic, |  |
| Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms. |  |
| Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean | *5* |
| Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest. |  |
|   |  |
|   This is the forest primeval; but where are the hearts that beneath it |  |
| Leaped like the roe, when he hears in the woodland the voice of the huntsman? |  |
| Where is the thatch-roofed village, the home of Acadian farmers,— |  |
| Men whose lives glided on like rivers that water the woodlands, | *10* |
| Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven? |  |
| Waste are those pleasant farms, and the farmers forever departed! |  |
| Scattered like dust and leaves, when the mighty blasts of October |  |
| Seize them, and whirl them aloft, and sprinkle them far o’er the ocean. |  |
| Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful village of Grand-Pré. | *15* |
|   |  |
|   Ye who believe in affection that hopes, and endures, and is patient, |  |
| Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of woman’s devotion, |  |
| List to the mournful tradition, still sung by the pines of the forest; |  |
| List to a Tale of Love in Acadie, home of the happy. |  |
|   |  |
| PART THE FIRSTIIN the Acadian land, on the shores of the Basin of Minas, | *20* |
| Distant, secluded, still, the little village of Grand-Pré |  |
| Lay in the fruitful valley. Vast meadows stretched to the eastward, |  |
| Giving the village its name, and pasture to flocks without number. |  |
| Dikes, that the hands of the farmers had raised with labor incessant, |  |
| Shut out the turbulent tides; but at stated seasons the flood-gates | *25* |
| Opened, and welcomed the sea to wander at will o’er the meadows. |  |
| West and south there were fields of flax, and orchards and cornfields |  |
| Spreading afar and unfenced o’er the plain; and away to the northward |  |
| Blomidon rose, and the forests old, and aloft on the mountains |  |
| Sea-fogs pitched their tents, and mists from the mighty Atlantic | *30* |
| Looked on the happy valley, but ne’er from their station descended. |  |
| There, in the midst of its farms, reposed the Acadian village. |  |
| Strongly built were the houses, with frames of oak and of hemlock, |  |
| Such as the peasants of Normandy built in the reign of the Henries. |  |
| Thatched were the roofs, with dormer-windows; and gables projecting | *35* |
| Over the basement below protected and shaded the doorway. |  |
| There in the tranquil evenings of summer, when brightly the sunset |  |
| Lighted the village street, and gilded the vanes on the chimneys, |  |
| Matrons and maidens sat in snow-white caps and in kirtles |  |
| Scarlet and blue and green, with distaffs spinning the golden | *40* |
| Flax for the gossiping looms, whose noisy shuttles within doors |  |
| Mingled their sounds with the whir of the wheels and the songs of the maidens. |  |
| Solemnly down the street came the parish priest, and the children |  |
| Paused in their play to kiss the hand he extended to bless them. |  |
| Reverend walked he among them; and up rose matrons and maidens, | *45* |
| Hailing his slow approach with words of affectionate welcome. |  |
| Then came the laborers home from the field, and serenely the sun sank |  |
| Down to his rest, and twilight prevailed. Anon from the belfry |  |
| Softly the Angelus sounded, and over the roofs of the village |  |
| Columns of pale blue smoke, like clouds of incense ascending, | *50* |
| Rose from a hundred hearths, the homes of peace and contentment. |  |
| Thus dwelt together in love these simple Acadian farmers,— |  |
| Dwelt in the love of God and of man. Alike were they free from |  |
| Fear, that reigns with the tyrant, and envy, the vice of republics. |  |
| Neither locks had they to their doors, nor bars to their windows; | *55* |
| But their dwellings were open as day and the hearts of the owners; |  |
| There the richest was poor, and the poorest lived in abundance. |  |
|   |  |
|   Somewhat apart from the village, and nearer the Basin of Minas, |  |
| Benedict Bellefontaine, the wealthiest farmer of Grand-Pré, |  |
| Dwelt on his goodly acres; and with him, directing his household, | *60* |
| Gentle Evangeline lived, his child, and the pride of the village. |  |
| Stalwart and stately in form was the man of seventy winters; |  |
| Hearty and hale was he, an oak that is covered with snowflakes; |  |
| White as the snow were his locks, and his cheeks as brown as the oak-leaves. |  |
| Fair was she to behold, that maiden of seventeen summers. | *65* |
| Black were her eyes as the berry that grows on the thorn by the wayside, |  |
| Black, yet how softly they gleamed beneath the brown shade of her tresses! |  |
| Sweet was her breath as the breath of kine that feed in the meadows. |  |
| When in the harvest heat she bore to the reapers at noontide |  |
| Flagons of home-brewed ale, ah! fair in sooth was the maiden. | *70* |
| Fairer was she when, on Sunday morn, while the bell from its turret |  |
| Sprinkled with holy sounds the air, as the priest with his hyssop |  |
| Sprinkles the congregation, and scatters blessings upon them, |  |
| Down the long street she passed, with her chaplet of beads and her missal, |  |
| Wearing her Norman cap, and her kirtle of blue, and the ear-rings, | *75* |
| Brought in the olden time from France, and since, as an heirloom, |  |
| Handed down from mother to child, through long generations. |  |
| But a celestial brightness—a more ethereal beauty— |  |
| Shone on her face and encircled her form, when, after confession, |  |
| Homeward serenely she walked with God’s benediction upon her. | *80* |
| When she had passed, it seemed like the ceasing of exquisite music. |  |
|   |  |
|   Firmly builded with rafters of oak, the house of the farmer |  |
| Stood on the side of a hill commanding the sea; and a shady |  |
| Sycamore grew by the door, with a woodbine wreathing around it. |  |
| Rudely carved was the porch, with seats beneath; and a footpath | *85* |
| Led through an orchard wide, and disappeared in the meadow. |  |
| Under the sycamore-tree were hives overhung by a penthouse, |  |
| Such as the traveller sees in regions remote by the roadside, |  |
| Built o’er a box for the poor, or the blessed image of Mary. |  |
| Farther down, on the slope of the hill, was the well with its moss-grown | *90* |
| Bucket, fastened with iron, and near it a trough for the horses. |  |
| Shielding the house from storms, on the north, were the barns and the farmyard. |  |
| There stood the broad-wheeled wains and the antique ploughs and the harrows; |  |
| There were the folds for the sheep; and there, in his feathered seraglio, |  |
| Strutted the lordly turkey, and crowed the cock, with the selfsame | *95* |
| Voice that in ages of old had startled the penitent Peter. |  |
| Bursting with hay were the barns, themselves a village. In each one |  |
| Far o’er the gable projected a roof of thatch; and a staircase, |  |
| Under the sheltering eaves, led up to the odorous cornloft. |  |
| There too the dove-cot stood, with its meek and innocent inmates | *100* |
| Murmuring ever of love; while above in the variant breezes |  |
| Numberless noisy weathercocks rattled and sang of mutation. |  |
|   |  |
|   Thus, at peace with God and the world, the farmer of Grand-Pré |  |
| Lived on his sunny farm, and Evangeline governed his household. |  |
| Many a youth, as he knelt in church and opened his missal, | *105* |
| Fixed his eyes upon her as the saint of his deepest devotion; |  |
| Happy was he who might touch her hand or the hem of her garment! |  |
| Many a suitor came to her door, by the darkness befriended, |  |
| And, as he knocked and waited to hear the sound of her footsteps, |  |
| Knew not which beat the louder, his heart or the knocker of iron; | *110* |
| Or at the joyous feast of the Patron Saint of the village, |  |
| Bolder grew, and pressed her hand in the dance as he whispered |  |
| Hurried words of love, that seemed a part of the music. |  |
| But, among all who came, young Gabriel only was welcome; |  |
| Gabriel Lajeunesse, the son of Basil the blacksmith, | *115* |
| Who was a mighty man in the village, and honored of all men; |  |
| For, since the birth of time, throughout all ages and nations, |  |
| Has the craft of the smith been held in repute by the people. |  |
| Basil was Benedict’s friend. Their children from earliest childhood |  |
| Grew up together as brother and sister; and Father Felician, | *120* |
| Priest and pedagogue both in the village, had taught them their letters |  |
| Out of the self-same book, with the hymns of the church and the plain-song. |  |
| But when the hymn was sung, and the daily lesson completed, |  |
| Swiftly they hurried away to the forge of Basil the blacksmith. |  |
| There at the door they stood, with wondering eyes to behold him | *125* |
| Take in his leathern lap the hoof of the horse as a plaything, |  |
| Nailing the shoe in its place; while near him the tire of the cart-wheel |  |
| Lay like a fiery snake, coiled round in a circle of cinders. |  |
| Oft on autumnal eves, when without in the gathering darkness |  |
| Bursting with light seemed the smithy, through every cranny and crevice, | *130* |
| Warm by the forge within they watched the laboring bellows, |  |
| And as its panting ceased, and the sparks expired in the ashes, |  |
| Merrily laughed, and said they were nuns going into the chapel. |  |
| Oft on sledges in winter, as swift as the swoop of the eagle, |  |
| Down the hillside bounding, they glided away o’er the meadow. | *135* |
| Oft in the barns they climbed to the populous nests on the rafters, |  |
| Seeking with eager eyes that wondrous stone, which the swallow |  |
| Brings from the shore of the sea to restore the sight of its fledglings; |  |
| Lucky was he who found that stone in the nest of the swallow! |  |
| Thus passed a few swift years, and they no longer were children. | *140* |
| He was a valiant youth, and his face, like the face of the morning, |  |
| Gladdened the earth with its light, and ripened thought into action. |  |
| She was a woman now, with the heart and hopes of a woman. |  |
| ‘Sunshine of Saint Eulalie’ was she called; for that was the sunshine |  |
| Which, as the farmers believed, would load their orchards with apples; | *145* |
| She, too, would bring to her husband’s house delight and abundance, |  |
| Filling it with love and the ruddy faces of children. |  |
|   |  |
| IINow had the season returned, when the nights grow colder and longer, |  |
| And the retreating sun the sign of the Scorpion enters. |  |
| Birds of passage sailed through the leaden air, from the ice-bound, | *150* |
| Desolate northern bays to the shores of tropical islands. |  |
| Harvests were gathered in; and wild with the winds of September |  |
| Wrestled the trees of the forest, as Jacob of old with the angel. |  |
| All the signs foretold a winter long and inclement. |  |
| Bees, with prophetic instinct of want, had hoarded their honey | *155* |
| Till the hives overflowed; and the Indian hunters asserted |  |
| Cold would the winter be, for thick was the fur of the foxes. |  |
| Such was the advent of autumn. Then followed that beautiful season, |  |
| Called by the pious Acadian peasants the Summer of All-Saints! |  |
| Filled was the air with a dreamy and magical light; and the landscape | *160* |
| Lay as if new-created in all the freshness of childhood. |  |
| Peace seemed to reign upon earth, and the restless heart of the ocean |  |
| Was for a moment consoled. All sounds were in harmony blended. |  |
| Voices of children at play, the crowing of cocks in the farm-yards, |  |
| Whir of wings in the drowsy air, and the cooing of pigeons, | *165* |
| All were subdued and low as the murmurs of love, and the great sun |  |
| Looked with the eye of love through the golden vapors around him; |  |
| While arrayed in its robes of russet and scarlet and yellow, |  |
| Bright with the sheen of the dew, each glittering tree of the forest |  |
| Flashed like the plane-tree the Persian adorned with mantles and jewels. [1](http://www.bartleby.com/42/791.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22noteFN2) | *170* |
|   |  |
|   Now recommenced the reign of rest and affection and stillness. |  |
| Day with its burden and heat had departed, and twilight descending |  |
| Brought back the evening star to the sky, and the herds to the homestead. |  |
| Pawing the ground they came, and resting their necks on each other, |  |
| And with their nostrils distended inhaling the freshness of evening. | *175* |
| Foremost, bearing the bell, Evangeline’s beautiful heifer, |  |
| Proud of her snow-white hide, and the ribbon that waved from her collar, |  |
| Quietly paced and slow, as if conscious of human affection. |  |
| Then came the shepherd back with his bleating flocks from the seaside, |  |
| Where was their favorite pasture. Behind them followed the watch-dog, | *180* |
| Patient, full of importance, and grand in the pride of his instinct, |  |
| Walking from side to side with a lordly air, and superbly |  |
| Waving his bushy tail, and urging forward the stragglers; |  |
| Regent of flocks was he when the shepherd slept; their protector, |  |
| When from the forest at night, through the starry silence the wolves howled. | *185* |
| Late, with the rising moon, returned the wains from the marshes, |  |
| Laden with briny hay, that filled the air with its odor. |  |
| Cheerily neighed the steeds, with dew on their manes and their fetlocks, |  |
| While aloft on their shoulders the wooden and ponderous saddles, |  |
| Painted with brilliant dyes, and adorned with tassels of crimson, | *190* |
| Nodded in bright array, like hollyhocks heavy with blossoms. |  |
| Patiently stood the cows meanwhile, and yielded their udders |  |
| Unto the milkmaid’s hand; whilst loud and in regular cadence |  |
| Into the sounding pails the foaming streamlets descended. |  |
| Lowing of cattle and peals of laughter were heard in the farm-yard, | *195* |
| Echoed back by the barns. Anon they sank into stillness; |  |
| Heavily closed, with a jarring sound, the valves of the barn-doors, |  |
| Rattled the wooden bars, and all for a season was silent. |  |
|   |  |
|   In-doors, warm by the wide-mouthed fireplace, idly the farmer |  |
| Sat in his elbow-chair and watched how the flames and the smoke-wreaths | *200* |
| Struggled together like foes in a burning city. Behind him, |  |
| Nodding and mocking along the wall, with gestures fantastic, |  |
| Darted his own huge shadow, and vanished away into darkness. |  |
| Faces, clumsily carved in oak, on the back of his arm-chair |  |
| Laughed in the flickering light; and the pewter plates on the dresser | *205* |
| Caught and reflected the flame, as shields of armies the sunshine. |  |
| Fragments of song the old man sang, and carols of Christmas, |  |
| Such as at home, in the olden time, his fathers before him |  |
| Sang in their Norman orchards and bright Burgundian vineyards. |  |
| Close at her father’s side was the gentle Evangeline seated, | *210* |
| Spinning flax for the loom, that stood in the corner behind her. |  |
| Silent awhile were its treadles, at rest was its diligent shuttle, |  |
| While the monotonous drone of the wheel, like the drone of a bagpipe, |  |
| Followed the old man’s song and united the fragments together. |  |
| As in a church, when the chant of the choir at intervals ceases, | *215* |
| Footfalls are heard in the aisles, or words of the priest at the altar, |  |
| So, in each pause of the song, with measured motion the clock clicked. |  |
|   |  |
|   Thus as they sat, there were footsteps heard, and, suddenly lifted, |  |
| Sounded the wooden latch, and the door swung back on its hinges. |  |
| Benedict knew by the hob-nailed shoes it was Basil the blacksmith, | *220* |
| And by her beating heart Evangeline knew who was with him. |  |
| ‘Welcome!’ the farmer exclaimed, as their footsteps paused on the threshold, |  |
| ‘Welcome, Basil, my friend! Come, take thy place on the settle |  |
| Close by the chimney-side, which is always empty without thee; |  |
| Take from the shelf overhead thy pipe and the box of tobacco; | *225* |
| Never so much thyself art thou as when through the curling |  |
| Smoke of the pipe or the forge thy friendly and jovial face gleams |  |
| Round and red as the harvest moon through the mist of the marshes.’ |  |
| Then, with a smile of content, thus answered Basil the blacksmith, |  |
| Taking with easy air the accustomed seat by the fireside:— | *230* |
| ‘Benedict Bellefontaine, thou hast ever thy jest and thy ballad! |  |
| Ever in cheerfullest mood art thou, when others are filled with |  |
| Gloomy forebodings of ill, and see only ruin before them. |  |
| Happy art thou, as if every day thou hadst picked up a horseshoe.’ |  |
| Pausing a moment, to take the pipe that Evangeline brought him, | *235* |
| And with a coal from the embers had lighted, he slowly continued:— |  |
| ‘Four days now are passed since the English ships at their anchors |  |
| Ride in the Gaspereau’s mouth, with their cannon pointed against us. |  |
| What their design may be is unknown; but all are commanded |  |
| On the morrow to meet in the church, where his Majesty’s mandate | *240* |
| Will be proclaimed as law in the land. Alas! in the mean time |  |
| Many surmises of evil alarm the hearts of the people.’ |  |
| Then made answer the farmer: ‘Perhaps some friendlier purpose |  |
| Brings these ships to our shores. Perhaps the harvests in England |  |
| By untimely rains or untimelier heat have been blighted, | *245* |
| And from our bursting barns they would feed their cattle and children.’ |  |
| ‘Not so thinketh the folk in the village,’ said, warmly, the blacksmith, |  |
| Shaking his head, as in doubt; then, heaving a sigh, he continued:— |  |
| ‘Louisburg is not forgotten, nor Beau Séjour, nor Port Royal. |  |
| Many already have fled to the forest, and lurk on its outskirts, | *250* |
| Waiting with anxious hearts the dubious fate of to-morrow. |  |
| Arms have been taken from us, and warlike weapons of all kinds; |  |
| Nothing is left but the blacksmith’s sledge and the scythe of the mower.’ |  |
| Then with a pleasant smile made answer the jovial farmer:— |  |
| ‘Safer are we unarmed, in the midst of our flocks and our cornfields, | *255* |
| Safer within these peaceful dikes, besieged by the ocean, |  |
| Than our fathers in forts, besieged by the enemy’s cannon. |  |
| Fear no evil, my friend, and to-night may no shadow of sorrow |  |
| Fall on this house and earth; for this is the night of the contract. |  |
| Built are the house and the barn. The merry lads of the village | *260* |
| Strongly have built them and well; and, breaking the glebe round about them, |  |
| Filled the barn with hay, and the house with food for a twelvemonth. |  |
| René Leblanc will be here anon, with his papers and ink-horn. |  |
| Shall we not then be glad, and rejoice in the joy of our children?’ |  |
| As apart by the window she stood, with her hand in her lover’s, | *265* |
| Blushing Evangeline heard the words that her father had spoken, |  |
| And, as they died on his lips, the worthy notary entered. |  |
|   |  |
| IIIBent like a laboring oar, that toils in the surf of the ocean, |  |
| Bent, but not broken, by age was the form of the notary public; |  |
| Shocks of yellow hair, like the silken floss of the maize, hung | *270* |
| Over his shoulders; his forehead was high; and glasses with horn bows |  |
| Sat astride on his nose, with a look of wisdom supernal. |  |
| Father of twenty children was he, and more than a hundred |  |
| Children’s children rode on his knee, and heard his great watch tick. |  |
| Four long years in the times of the war had he languished a captive, | *275* |
| Suffering much in an old French fort as the friend of the English. |  |
| Now, though warier grown, without all guile or suspicion, |  |
| Ripe in wisdom was he, but patient, and simple, and childlike. |  |
| He was beloved by all, and most of all by the children; |  |
| For he told them tales of the Loup-garou in the forest, | *280* |
| And of the goblin that came in the night to water the horses, |  |
| And of the white Létiche, the ghost of a child who unchristened |  |
| Died, and was doomed to haunt unseen the chambers of children; |  |
| And how on Christmas eve the oxen talked in the stable, |  |
| And how the fever was cured by a spider shut up in a nutshell, | *285* |
| And of the marvellous powers of four-leaved clover and horseshoes, |  |
| With whatsoever else was writ in the lore of the village. |  |
| Then up rose from his seat by the fireside Basil the blacksmith, |  |
| Knocked from his pipe the ashes, and slowly extending his right hand, |  |
| ‘Father Leblanc,’ he exclaimed, ‘thou hast heard the talk in the village, | *290* |
| And, perchance, canst tell us some news of these ships and their errand.’ |  |
| Then with modest demeanor made answer the notary public,— |  |
| ‘Gossip enough have I heard, in sooth, yet am never the wiser; |  |
| And what their errand may be I know not better than others. |  |
| Yet am I not of those who imagine some evil intention | *295* |
| Brings them here, for we are at peace; and why then molest us?’ |  |
| ‘God’s name!’ shouted the hasty and somewhat irascible blacksmith; |  |
| ‘Must we in all things look for the how, and the why, and the where-fore? |  |
| Daily injustice is done, and might is the right of the strongest!’ |  |
| But without heeding his warmth, continued the notary public,— | *300* |
| ‘Man is unjust, but God is just; and finally justice |  |
| Triumphs; and well I remember a story, that often consoled me, |  |
| When as a captive I lay in the old French fort at Port Royal.’ |  |
| This was the old man’s favorite tale, and he loved to repeat it |  |
| When his neighbors complained that any injustice was done them. | *305* |
| ‘Once in an ancient city, whose name I no longer remember, |  |
| Raised aloft on a column, a brazen statue of Justice |  |
| Stood in the public square, upholding the scales in its left hand, |  |
| And in its right a sword, as an emblem that justice presided |  |
| Over the laws of the land, and the hearts and homes of the people. | *310* |
| Even the birds had built their nests in the scales of the balance, |  |
| Having no fear of the sword that flashed in the sunshine above them. |  |
| But in the course of time the laws of the land were corrupted; |  |
| Might took the place of right, and the weak were oppressed, and the mighty |  |
| Ruled with an iron rod. Then it chanced in a nobleman’s palace | *315* |
| That a necklace of pearls was lost, and erelong a suspicion |  |
| Fell on an orphan girl who lived as a maid in the household. |  |
| She, after form of trial condemned to die on the scaffold, |  |
| Patiently met her doom at the foot of the statue of Justice. |  |
| As to her Father in heaven her innocent spirit ascended, | *320* |
| Lo! o’er the city a tempest rose; and the bolts of the thunder |  |
| Smote the statue of bronze, and hurled in wrath from its left hand |  |
| Down on the pavement below the clattering scales of the balance, |  |
| And in the hollow thereof was found the nest of a magpie, |  |
| Into whose clay-built walls the necklace of pearls was inwoven.’ | *325* |
| Silenced, but not convinced, when the story was ended, the blacksmith |  |
| Stood like a man who fain would speak, but findeth no language; |  |
| All his thoughts were congealed into lines on his face, as the vapors |  |
| Freeze in fantastic shapes on the window-panes in the winter. |  |
|   |  |
|   Then Evangeline lighted the brazen lamp on the table, | *330* |
| Filled, till it overflowed, the pewter tankard with home-brewed |  |
| Nut-brown ale, that was famed for its strength in the village of Grand-Pré; |  |
| While from his pocket the notary drew his papers and ink-horn, |  |
| Wrote with a steady hand the date and the age of the parties, |  |
| Naming the dower of the bride in flocks of sheep and in cattle. | *335* |
| Orderly all things proceeded, and duly and well were completed, |  |
| And the great seal of the law was set like a sun on the margin. |  |
| Then from his leathern pouch the farmer threw on the table |  |
| Three times the old man’s fee in solid pieces of silver; |  |
| And the notary rising, and blessing the bride and the bridegroom, | *340* |
| Lifted aloft the tankard of ale and drank to their welfare. |  |
| Wiping the foam from his lip, he solemnly bowed and departed, |  |
| While in silence the others sat and mused by the fireside, |  |
| Till Evangeline brought the draught-board out of its corner. |  |
| Soon was the game begun. In friendly contention the old men | *345* |
| Laughed at each lucky hit, or unsuccessful manœuvre, |  |
| Laughed when a man was crowned, or a breach was made in the king-row. |  |
| Meanwhile apart, in the twilight gloom of a window’s embrasure, |  |
| Sat the lovers, and whispered together, beholding the moon rise |  |
| Over the pallid sea, and the silvery mists of the meadows. | *350* |
| Silently one by one, in the infinite meadows of heaven, |  |
| Blossomed the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels. |  |
|   |  |
|   Thus was the evening passed. Anon the bell from the belfry |  |
| Rang out the hour of nine, the village curfew, and straightway |  |
| Rose the guests and departed; and silence reigned in the household. | *355* |
| Many a farewell word and sweet good-night on the door-step |  |
| Lingered long in Evangeline’s heart, and filled it with gladness. |  |
| Carefully then were covered the embers that glowed on the hearth-stone, |  |
| And on the oaken stairs resounded the tread of the farmer. |  |
| Soon with a soundless step the foot of Evangeline followed. | *360* |
| Up the staircase moved a luminous space in the darkness, |  |
| Lighted less by the lamp than the shining face of the maiden. |  |
| Silent she passed the hall, and entered the door of her chamber. |  |
| Simple that chamber was, with its curtains of white, and its clothes-press |  |
| Ample and high, on whose spacious shelves were carefully folded | *365* |
| Linen and woollen stuffs, by the hand of Evangeline woven. |  |
| This was the precious dower she would bring to her husband in marriage, |  |
| Better than flocks and herds, being proofs of her skill as a housewife. |  |
| Soon she extinguished her lamp, for the mellow and radiant moonlight |  |
| Streamed through the windows, and lighted the room, till the heart of the maiden | *370* |
| Swelled and obeyed its power, like the tremulous tides of the ocean. |  |
| Ah! she was fair, exceeding fair to behold, as she stood with |  |
| Naked snow-white feet on the gleaming floor of her chamber! |  |
| Little she dreamed that below, among the trees of the orchard, |  |
| Waited her lover and watched for the gleam of her lamp and her shadow. | *375* |
| Yet were her thoughts of him, and at times a feeling of sadness |  |
| Passed o’er her soul, as the sailing shade of clouds in the moonlight |  |
| Flitted across the floor and darkened the room for a moment. |  |
| And, as she gazed from the window, she saw serenely the moon pass |  |
| Forth from the folds of a cloud, and one star follow her footsteps, | *380* |
| As out of Abraham’s tent young Ishmael wandered with Hagar! |  |
|   |  |
| IVPleasantly rose next morn the sun on the village of Grand-Pré. |  |
| Pleasantly gleamed in the soft, sweet air the Basin of Minas, |  |
| Where the ships, with their wavering shadows, were riding at anchor. |  |
| Life had long been astir in the village, and clamorous labor | *385* |
| Knocked with its hundred hands at the golden gates of the morning. |  |
| Now from the country around, from the farms and neighboring hamlets, |  |
| Came in their holiday dresses the blithe Acadian peasants. |  |
| Many a glad good-morrow and jocund laugh from the young folk |  |
| Made the bright air brighter, as up from the numerous meadows, | *390* |
| Where no path could be seen but the track of wheels in the greensward, |  |
| Group after group appeared, and joined, or passed on the highway. |  |
| Long ere noon, in the village all sounds of labor were silenced. |  |
| Thronged were the streets with people; and noisy groups at the housedoors |  |
| Sat in the cheerful sun, and rejoiced and gossiped together. | *395* |
| Every house was an inn, where all were welcomed and feasted; |  |
| For with this simple people, who lived like brothers together, |  |
| All things were held in common, and what one had was another’s. |  |
| Yet under Benedict’s roof hospitality seemed more abundant: |  |
| For Evangeline stood among the guests of her father; | *400* |
| Bright was her face with smiles, and words of welcome and gladness |  |
| Fell from her beautiful lips, and blessed the cup as she gave it. |  |
|   |  |
|   Under the open sky, in the odorous air of the orchard, |  |
| Stript of its golden fruit, was spread the feast of betrothal. |  |
| There in the shade of the porch were the priest and the notary seated; | *405* |
| There good Benedict sat, and sturdy Basil the blacksmith. |  |
| Not far withdrawn from these, by the cider-press and the beehives, |  |
| Michael the fiddler was placed, with the gayest of hearts and of waistcoats. |  |
| Shadow and light from the leaves alternately played on his snow-white |  |
| Hair, as it waved in the wind; and the jolly face of the fiddler | *410* |
| Glowed like a living coal when the ashes are blown from the embers. |  |
| Gayly the old man sang to the vibrant sound of his fiddle, |  |
| *Tous les Bourgeois de Chartres,* and *Le Carillon de Dunquerque,* |  |
| And anon with his wooden shoes beat time to the music. |  |
| Merrily, merrily whirled the wheels of the dizzying dances | *415* |
| Under the orchard-trees and down the path to the meadows; |  |
| Old folk and young together, and children mingled among them. |  |
| Fairest of all the maids was Evangeline, Benedict’s daughter! |  |
| Noblest of all the youths was Gabriel, son of the blacksmith! |  |
|   |  |
|   So passed the morning away. And lo! with a summons sonorous | *420* |
| Sounded the bell from its tower, and over the meadows a drum beat. |  |
| Thronged erelong was the church with men. Without, in the churchyard, |  |
| Waited the women. They stood by the graves, and hung on the headstones |  |
| Garlands of autumn-leaves and evergreens fresh from the forest. |  |
| Then came the guard from the ships, and marching proudly among them | *425* |
| Entered the sacred portal. With loud and dissonant clangor |  |
| Echoed the sound of their brazen drums from ceiling and casement,— |  |
| Echoed a moment only, and slowly the ponderous portal |  |
| Closed, and in silence the crowd awaited the will of the soldiers. |  |
| Then uprose their commander, and spake from the steps of the altar, | *430* |
| Holding aloft in his hands, with its seals, the royal commission. |  |
| ‘You are convened this day,’ he said, ‘by his Majesty’s orders. |  |
| Clement and kind has he been; but how you have answered his kindness, |  |
| Let your own hearts reply! To my natural make and my temper |  |
| Painful the task is I do, which to you I know must be grievous. | *435* |
| Yet must I bow and obey, and deliver the will of our monarch; |  |
| Namely, that all your lands, and dwellings, and cattle of all kinds |  |
| Forfeited be to the crown; and that you yourselves from this province |  |
| Be transported to other lands. God grant you may dwell there |  |
| Ever as faithful subjects, a happy and peaceable people! | *440* |
| Prisoners now I declare you; for such is his Majesty’s pleasure!’ |  |
| As, when the air is serene in sultry solstice of summer, |  |
| Suddenly gathers a storm, and the deadly sling of the hailstones |  |
| Beats down the farmer’s corn in the field and shatters his windows, |  |
| Hiding the sun, and strewing the ground with thatch from the houseroofs, | *445* |
| Bellowing fly the herds, and seek to break their enclosures; |  |
| So on the hearts of the people descended the words of the speaker. |  |
| Silent a moment they stood in speechless wonder, and then rose |  |
| Louder and ever louder a wail of sorrow and anger, |  |
| And, by one impulse moved, they madly rushed to the doorway. | *450* |
| Vain was the hope of escape; and cries and fierce imprecations |  |
| Rang through the house of prayer; and high o’er the heads of the others |  |
| Rose, with his arms uplifted, the figure of Basil the blacksmith, |  |
| As, on a stormy sea, a spar is tossed by the billows. |  |
| Flushed was his face and distorted with passion; and wildly he shouted,— | *455* |
| ‘Down with the tyrants of England! we never have sworn them allegiance! |  |
| Death to these foreign soldiers, who seize on our homes and our harvests!’ |  |
| More he fain would have said, but the merciless hand of a soldier |  |
| Smote him upon the mouth, and dragged him down to the pavement. |  |
|   |  |
|   In the midst of the strife and tumult of angry contention, | *460* |
| Lo! the door of the chancel opened, and Father Felician |  |
| Entered, with serious mien, and ascended the steps of the altar. |  |
| Raising his reverend hand, with a gesture he awed into silence |  |
| All that clamorous throng; and thus he spake to his people; |  |
| Deep were his tones and solemn; in accents measured and mournful | *465* |
| Spake he, as, after the tocsin’s alarum, distinctly the clock strikes. |  |
| ‘What is this that ye do, my children? what madness has seized you? |  |
| Forty years of my life have I labored among you, and taught you, |  |
| Not in word alone, but in deed, to love one another! |  |
| Is this the fruit of my toils, of my vigils and prayers and privations? | *470* |
| Have you so soon forgotten all lessons of love and forgiveness? |  |
| This is the house of the Prince of Peace, and would you profane it |  |
| Thus with violent deeds and hearts overflowing with hatred? |  |
| Lo! where the crucified Christ from his cross is gazing upon you! |  |
| See! in those sorrowful eyes what meekness and holy compassion! | *475* |
| Hark! how those lips still repeat the prayer, “O Father, forgive them!” |  |
| Let us repeat that prayer in the hour when the wicked assail us, |  |
| Let us repeat it now, and say, “O Father, forgive them!’” |  |
| Few were his words of rebuke, but deep in the hearts of his people |  |
| Sank they, and sobs of contrition succeeded the passionate outbreak, | *480* |
| While they repeated his prayer, and said, ‘O Father, forgive them!’ |  |
|   |  |
|   Then came the evening service. The tapers gleamed from the altar. |  |
| Fervent and deep was the voice of the priest, and the people responded, |  |
| Not with their lips alone, but their hearts; and the Ave Maria |  |
| Sang they, and fell on their knees, and their souls, with devotion translated, | *485* |
| Rose on the ardor of prayer, like Elijah ascending to heaven. |  |
|   |  |
|   Meanwhile had spread in the village the tidings of ill, and on all sides |  |
| Wandered, wailing, from house to house the women and children. |  |
| Long at her father’s door Evangeline stood, with her right hand |  |
| Shielding her eyes from the level rays of the sun, that, descending, | *490* |
| Lighted the village street with mysterious splendor, and roofed each |  |
| Peasant’s cottage with golden thatch, and emblazoned its windows. |  |
| Long within had been spread the snow-white cloth on the table; |  |
| There stood the wheaten loaf, and the honey fragrant with wild-flowers; |  |
| There stood the tankard of ale, and the cheese fresh brought from the dairy, | *495* |
| And, at the head of the board, the great arm-chair of the farmer. |  |
| Thus did Evangeline wait at her father’s door, as the sunset |  |
| Threw the long shadows of trees o’er the broad ambrosial meadows. |  |
| Ah! on her spirit within a deeper shadow had fallen, |  |
| And from the fields of her soul a fragrance celestial ascended,— | *500* |
| Charity, meekness, love, and hope, and forgiveness, and patience! |  |
| Then, all-forgetful of self, she wandered into the village, |  |
| Cheering with looks and words the mournful hearts of the women, |  |
| As o’er the darkening fields with lingering steps they departed, |  |
| Urged by their household cares, and the weary feet of their children. | *505* |
| Down sank the great red sun, and in golden, glimmering vapors |  |
| Veiled the light of his face, like the Prophet descending from Sinai. |  |
| Sweetly over the village the bell of the Angelus sounded. |  |
|   |  |
|   Meanwhile, amid the gloom, by the church Evangeline lingered. |  |
| All was silent within; and in vain at the door and the windows | *510* |
| Stood she, and listened and looked, till, overcome by emotion, |  |
| ‘Gabriel!’ cried she aloud with tremulous voice; but no answer |  |
| Came from the graves of the dead, nor the gloomier grave of the living. |  |
| Slowly at length she returned to the tenantless house of her father. |  |
| Smouldered the fire on the hearth, on the board was the supper untasted, | *515* |
| Empty and drear was each room, and haunted with phantoms of terror. |  |
| Sadly echoed her step on the stair and the floor of her chamber. |  |
| In the dead of the night she heard the disconsolate rain fall |  |
| Loud on the withered leaves of the sycamore-tree by the window. |  |
| Keenly the lightning flashed; and governed the voice of the echoing thunder | *520* |
| Told her that God was in heaven, and governed the world He created! |  |
| Then she remembered the tale she had heard of the justice of Heaven; |  |
| Soothed was her troubled soul, and she peacefully slumbered till morning. |  |
|   |  |
| VFour times the sun had risen and set; and now on the fifth day |  |
| Cheerily called the cock to the sleeping maids of the farmhouse. | *525* |
| Soon o’er the yellow fields, in silent and mournful procession, |  |
| Came from the neighboring hamlets and farms the Acadian women, |  |
| Driving in ponderous wains their household goods to the sea-shore, |  |
| Pausing and looking back to gaze once more on their dwellings, |  |
| Ere they were shut from sight by the winding road and the woodland. | *530* |
| Close at their sides their children ran, and urged on the oxen, |  |
| While in their little hands they clasped some fragments of playthings. |  |
|   |  |
|   Thus to the Gaspereau’s mouth they hurried; and there on the sea-beach |  |
| Piled in confusion lay the household goods of the peasants. |  |
| All day long between the shore and the ships did the boats ply; | *535* |
| All day long the wains came laboring down from the village. |  |
| Late in the afternoon, when the sun was near to his setting, |  |
| Echoed far o’er the fields came the roll of drums from the churchyard. |  |
| Thither the women and children thronged. On a sudden the church-doors |  |
| Opened, and forth came the guard, and marching in gloomy procession | *540* |
| Followed the long-imprisoned, but patient, Acadian farmers. |  |
| Even as pilgrims, who journey afar from their homes and their country, |  |
| Sing as they go, and in singing forget they are weary and wayworn, |  |
| So with songs on their lips the Acadian peasants descended |  |
| Down from the church to the shore, amid their wives and their daughters. | *545* |
| Foremost the young men came; and, raising together their voices, |  |
| Sang with tremulous lips a chant of the Catholic Missions:— |  |
| ‘Sacred heart of the Saviour! O inexhaustible fountain! |  |
| Fill our hearts this day with strength and submission and patience!’ |  |
| Then the old men, as they marched, and the women that stood by the wayside | *550* |
| Joined in the sacred psalm, and the birds in the sunshine above them |  |
| Mingled their notes therewith, like voices of spirits departed. |  |
|   |  |
|   Half-way down to the shore Evangeline waited in silence, |  |
| Not overcome with grief, but strong in the hour of affliction,— |  |
| Calmly and sadly she waited, until the procession approached her, | *555* |
| And she beheld the face of Gabriel pale with emotion. |  |
| Tears then filled her eyes, and, eagerly running to meet him, |  |
| Clasped she his hands, and laid her head on his shoulder, and whispered,— |  |
| ‘Gabriel! be of good cheer! for if we love one another |  |
| Nothing, in truth, can harm us, whatever mischances may happen!’ | *560* |
| Smiling she spake these words; then suddenly paused, for her father |  |
| Saw she slowly advancing. Alas! how changed was his aspect! |  |
| Gone was the glow from his cheek, and the fire from his eye, and his footstep |  |
| Heavier seemed with the weight of the heavy heart in his bosom. |  |
| But with a smile and a sigh, she clasped his neck and embraced him, | *565* |
| Speaking words of endearment where words of comfort availed not. |  |
| Thus to the Gaspereau’s mouth moved on that mournful procession. |  |
|   |  |
|   There disorder prevailed, and the tumult and stir of embarking. |  |
| Busily plied the freighted boats; and in the confusion |  |
| Wives were torn from their husbands, and mothers, too late, saw their children | *570* |
| Left on the land, extending their arms, with wildest entreaties. |  |
| So unto separate ships were Basil and Gabriel carried, |  |
| While in despair on the shore Evangeline stood with her father. |  |
| Half the task was not done when the sun went down, and the twilight |  |
| Deepened and darkened around; and in haste the refluent ocean | *575* |
| Fled away from the shore, and left the line of the sand-beach |  |
| Covered with waifs of the tide, with kelp and the slippery sea-weed. |  |
| Farther back in the midst of the household goods and the wagons, |  |
| Like to a gypsy camp, or a leaguer after a battle, |  |
| All escape cut off by the sea, and the sentinels near them, | *580* |
| Lay encamped for the night the houseless Acadian farmers. |  |
| Back to its nethermost caves retreated the bellowing ocean, |  |
| Dragging adown the beach the rattling pebbles, and leaving |  |
| Inland and far up the shore the stranded boats of the sailors. |  |
| Then, as the night descended, the herds returned from their pastures; | *585* |
| Sweet was the moist still air with the odor of milk from their udders; |  |
| Lowing they waited, and long, at the well-known bars of the farm-yard,— |  |
| Waited and looked in vain for the voice and the hand of the milk-maid. |  |
| Silence reigned in the streets; from the church no Angelus sounded, |  |
| Rose no smoke from the roofs, and gleamed no lights from the windows. | *590* |
|   |  |
|   But on the shores meanwhile the evening fires had been kindled, |  |
| Built of the drift-wood thrown on the sands from wrecks in the tempest. |  |
| Round them shapes of gloom and sorrowful faces were gathered, |  |
| Voices of women were heard, and of men, and the crying of children. |  |
| Onward from fire to fire, as from hearth to hearth in his parish, | *595* |
| Wandered the faithful priest, consoling and blessing and cheering, |  |
| Like unto shipwrecked Paul on Melita’s desolate sea-shore. |  |
| Thus he approached the place where Evangeline sat with her father, |  |
| And in the flickering light beheld the face of the old man, |  |
| Haggard and hollow and wan, and without either thought or emotion, | *600* |
| E’en as the face of a clock from which the hands have been taken. |  |
| Vainly Evangeline strove with words and caresses to cheer him, |  |
| Vainly offered him food; yet he moved not, he looked not, he spake not, |  |
| But, with a vacant stare, ever gazed at the flickering firelight. |  |
| *‘Benedicite!’* murmured the priest, in tones of compassion. | *605* |
| More he fain would have said, but his heart was full, and his accents |  |
| Faltered and paused on his lips, as the feet of a child on a threshold, |  |
| Hushed by the scene he beholds, and the awful presence of sorrow. |  |
| Silently, therefore, he laid his hand on the head of the maiden, |  |
| Raising his tearful eyes to the silent stars that above them | *610* |
| Moved on their way, unperturbed by the wrongs and sorrows of mortals. |  |
| Then sat he down at her side, and they wept together in silence. |  |
|   |  |
|   Suddenly rose from the south a light, as in autumn the blood-red |  |
| Moon climbs the crystal walls of heaven, and o’er the horizon |  |
| Titan-like stretches its hundred hands upon the mountain and meadow, | *615* |
| Seizing the rocks and the rivers and piling huge shadows together. |  |
| Broader and ever broader it gleamed on the roofs of the village, |  |
| Gleamed on the sky and sea, and the ships that lay in the roadstead. |  |
| Columns of shining smoke uprose, and flashes of flame were |  |
| Thrust through their folds and withdrawn, like the quivering hands of a martyr. | *620* |
| Then as the wind seized the gleeds and the burning thatch, and, uplifting, |  |
| Whirled them aloft through the air, at once from a hundred house-tops |  |
| Started the sheeted smoke with flashes of flame intermingled. |  |
|   |  |
|   These things beheld in dismay the crowd on the shore and on shipboard. |  |
| Speechless at first they stood, then cried aloud in their anguish, | *625* |
| ‘We shall behold no more our homes in the village of Grand-Pré!’ |  |
| Loud on a sudden the cocks began to crow in the farm-yards, |  |
| Thinking the day had dawned; and anon the lowing of cattle |  |
| Came on the evening breeze, by the barking of dogs interrupted. |  |
| Then rose a sound of dread, such as startles the sleeping encampments | *630* |
| Far in the western prairies or forests that skirt the Nebraska, |  |
| When the wild horses affrighted sweep by with the speed of the whirlwind, |  |
| Or the loud bellowing herds of buffaloes rush to the river. |  |
| Such was the sound that arose on the night, as the herds and the horses |  |
| Broke through their folds and fences, and madly rushed o’er the meadows. | *635* |
|   |  |
|   Overwhelmed with the sight, yet speechless, the priest and the maiden |  |
| Gazed on the scene of terror that reddened and widened before them: |  |
| And as they turned at length to speak to their silent companion, |  |
| Lo! from his seat he had fallen, and stretched abroad on the sea-shore |  |
| Motionless lay his form, from which the soul had departed. | *640* |
| Slowly the priest uplifted the lifeless head, and the maiden |  |
| Knelt at her father’s side, and wailed aloud in her terror. |  |
| Then in a swoon she sank, and lay with her head on his bosom. |  |
| Through the long night she lay in deep, oblivious slumber; |  |
| And when she awoke from the trance, she beheld a multitude near her. | *645* |
| Faces of friends she beheld, that were mournfully gazing upon her, |  |
| Pallid, with tearful eyes, and looks of saddest compassion. |  |
| Still the blaze of the burning village illumined the landscape, |  |
| Reddened the sky overhead, and gleamed on the faces around her, |  |
| And like the day of doom it seemed to her wavering senses. | *650* |
| Then a familiar voice she heard, as it said to the people,— |  |
| ‘Let us bury him here by the sea. When a happier season |  |
| Brings us again to our homes from the unknown land of our exile, |  |
| Then shall his sacred dust be piously laid in the church-yard.’ |  |
| Such were the words of the priest. And there in haste by the sea-side, | *655* |
| Having the glare of the burning village for funeral torches, |  |
| But without bell or book, they buried the farmer of Grand-Pré. |  |
| And as the voice of the priest repeated the service of sorrow, |  |
| Lo! with a mournful sound, like the voice of a vast congregation, |  |
| Solemnly answered the sea, and mingled its roar with the dirges. | *660* |
| ’Twas the returning tide, that afar from the waste of the ocean, |  |
| With the first dawn of the day, came heaving and hurrying landward. |  |
| Then recommenced once more the stir and noise of embarking; |  |
| And with the ebb of the tide the ships sailed out of the harbor, |  |
| Leaving behind them the dead on the shore, and the village in ruins. | *665* |
|   |  |
| PART THE SECONDIMANY a weary year had passed since the burning of Grand-Pré, |  |
| When on the falling tide the freighted vessels departed, |  |
| Bearing a nation, with all its household gods, into exile, |  |
| Exile without an end, and without an example in story. |  |
| Far asunder, on separate coasts, the Acadians landed; | *670* |
| Scattered were they, like flakes of snow, when the wind from the northeast |  |
| Strikes aslant through the fogs that darken the Banks of Newfoundland. |  |
| Friendless, homeless, hopeless, they wandered from city to city, |  |
| From the cold lakes of the North to sultry Southern savannas,— |  |
| From the bleak shores of the sea to the lands where the Father of Waters | *675* |
| Seizes the hills in his hands, and drags them down to the ocean, |  |
| Deep in their sands to bury the scattered bones of the mammoth. |  |
| Friends they sought and homes; and many, despairing, heart-broken, |  |
| Asked of the earth but a grave, and no longer a friend nor a fireside. |  |
| Written their history stands on tablets of stone in the churchyards. | *680* |
| Long among them was seen a maiden who waited and wandered, |  |
| Lowly and meek in spirit, and patiently suffering all things. |  |
| Fair was she and young; but, alas! before her extended, |  |
| Dreary and vast and silent, the desert of life, with its pathway |  |
| Marked by the graves of those who had sorrowed and suffered before her, | *685* |
| Passions long extinguished, and hopes long dead and abandoned, |  |
| As the emigrant’s way o’er the Western desert is marked by |  |
| Camp-fires long consumed, and bones that bleach in the sunshine. |  |
| Something there was in her life incomplete, imperfect, unfinished; |  |
| As if a morning of June, with all its music and sunshine, | *690* |
| Suddenly paused in the sky, and, fading, slowly descended |  |
| Into the east again, from whence it late had arisen. |  |
| Sometimes she lingered in towns, till, urged by the fever within her, |  |
| Urged by a restless longing, the hunger and thirst of the spirit, |  |
| She would commence again her endless search and endeavor; | *695* |
| Sometimes in churchyards strayed, and gazed on the crosses and tombstones, |  |
| Sat by some nameless grave, and thought that perhaps in its bosom |  |
| He was already at rest, and she longed to slumber beside him. |  |
| Sometimes a rumor, a hearsay, an inarticulate whisper, |  |
| Came with its airy hand to point and beckon her forward. | *700* |
| Sometimes she spake with those who had seen her beloved and known him, |  |
| But it was long ago, in some far-off place or forgotten. |  |
| ‘Gabriel Lajeunesse!’ they said; ‘Oh yes! we have seen him. |  |
| He was with Basil the blacksmith, and both have gone to the prairies; |  |
| Coureurs-des-Bois are they, and famous hunters and trappers.’ | *705* |
| ‘Gabriel Lajeunesse!’ said others; ‘Oh yes! we have seen him. |  |
| He is a Voyageur in the lowlands of Louisiana.’ |  |
| Then would they say, ‘Dear child! why dream and wait for him longer? |  |
| Are there not other youths as fair as Gabriel? others |  |
| Who have hearts as tender and true, and spirits as loyal? | *710* |
| Here is Baptiste Leblanc, the notary’s son, who has loved thee |  |
| Many a tedious year; come, give him thy hand and be happy! |  |
| Thou art too fair to be left to braid St. Catherine’s tresses.’ [2](http://www.bartleby.com/42/791.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22noteFN3) |  |
| Then would Evangeline answer, serenely but sadly, ‘I cannot! |  |
| Whither my heart has gone, there follows my hand, and not elsewhere. | *715* |
| For when the heart goes before, like a lamp, and illumines the pathway, |  |
| Many things are made clear, that else lie hidden in darkness.’ |  |
| Thereupon the priest, her friend and father-confessor, |  |
| Said, with a smile, ‘O daughter! thy God thus speaketh within thee! |  |
| Talk not of wasted affection, affection never was wasted; | *720* |
| If it enrich not the heart of another, its waters, returning |  |
| Back to their springs, like the rain, shall fill them full of refreshment; |  |
| That which the fountain sends forth returns again to the fountain. |  |
| Patience; accomplish thy labor; accomplish thy work of affection! |  |
| Sorrow and silence are strong, and patient endurance is godlike. | *725* |
| Therefore accomplish thy labor of love, till the heart is made godlike, |  |
| Purified, strengthened, perfected, and rendered more worthy of heaven!’ |  |
| Cheered by the good man’s words, Evangeline labored and waited. |  |
| Still in her heart she heard the funeral dirge of the ocean, |  |
| But with its sound there was mingled a voice that whispered, ‘Despair not!’ | *730* |
| Thus did that poor soul wander in want and cheerless discomfort, |  |
| Bleeding, barefooted, over the shards and thorns of existence. |  |
| Let me essay, O Muse! to follow the wanderer’s footsteps;— |  |
| Not through each devious path, each changeful year of existence, |  |
| But as a traveller follows a streamlet’s course through the valley: | *735* |
| Far from its margin at times, and seeing the gleam of its water |  |
| Here and there, in some open space, and at intervals only; |  |
| Then drawing nearer its banks, through sylvan glooms that conceal it, |  |
| Though he behold it not, he can hear its continuous murmur; |  |
| Happy, at length, if he find the spot where it reaches an outlet. | *740* |
|   |  |
| IIIt was the month of May. Far down the Beautiful River, |  |
| Past the Ohio shore and past the mouth of the Wabash, |  |
| Into the golden stream of the broad and swift Mississippi, |  |
| Floated a cumbrous boat, that was rowed by Acadian boatmen. |  |
| It was a band of exiles: a raft, as it were, from the shipwrecked | *745* |
| Nation, scattered along the coast, now floating together, |  |
| Bound by the bonds of a common belief and a common misfortune; |  |
| Men and women and children, who, guided by hope or by hearsay, |  |
| Sought for their kith and their kin among the few-acred farmers |  |
| On the Acadian coast, and the prairies of fair Opelousas. | *750* |
| With them Evangeline went, and her guide, the Father Felician. |  |
| Onward o’er sunken sands, through a wilderness sombre with forests, |  |
| Day after day they glided adown the turbulent river; |  |
| Night after night, by their blazing fires, encamped on its borders. |  |
| Now through rushing chutes, among green islands, where plumelike | *755* |
| Cotton-trees nodded their shadowy crests, they swept with the current, |  |
| Then emerged into broad lagoons, where silvery sand-bars |  |
| Lay in the stream, and along the wimpling waves of their margin, |  |
| Shining with snow-white plumes, large flocks of pelicans waded. |  |
| Level the landscape grew, and along the shores of the river, | *760* |
| Shaded by china-trees, in the midst of luxuriant gardens, |  |
| Stood the houses of planters, with negro-cabins and dove-cots. |  |
| They were approaching the region where reigns perpetual summer, |  |
| Where through the Golden Coast, and groves of orange and citron, |  |
| Sweeps with majestic curve the river away to the eastward. | *765* |
| They, too, swerved from their course; and entering the Bayou of Plaquemine, |  |
| Soon were lost in a maze of sluggish and devious waters, |  |
| Which, like a network of steel, extended in every direction. |  |
| Over their heads the towering and tenebrous boughs of the cypress |  |
| Met in a dusky arch, and trailing mosses in mid-air | *770* |
| Waved like banners that hang on the walls of ancient cathedrals. |  |
| Deathlike the silence seemed, and unbroken, save by the herons |  |
| Home to their roosts in the cedar-trees returning at sunset, |  |
| Or by the owl, as he greeted the moon with demoniac laughter. |  |
| Lovely the moonlight was as it glanced and gleamed on the water, | *775* |
| Gleamed on the columns of cypress and cedar sustaining the arches, |  |
| Down through whose broken vaults it fell as through chinks in a ruin. |  |
| Dreamlike, and indistinct, and strange were all things around them; |  |
| And o’er their spirits there came a feeling of wonder and sadness,— |  |
| Strange forebodings of ill, unseen and that cannot be compassed. | *780* |
| As, at the tramp of a horse’s hoof on the turf of the prairies, |  |
| Far in advance are closed the leaves of the shrinking mimosa, |  |
| So, at the hoof-beats of fate, with sad forebodings of evil, |  |
| Shrinks and closes the heart, ere the stroke of doom has attained it. |  |
| But Evangeline’s heart was sustained by a vision, that faintly | *785* |
| Floated before her eyes, and beckoned her on through the moonlight. |  |
| It was the thought of her brain that assumed the shape of a phantom. |  |
| Through those shadowy aisles had Gabriel wandered before her, |  |
| And every stroke of the oar now brought him nearer and nearer. |  |
|   |  |
|   Then in his place, at the prow of the boat, rose one of the oarsmen, | *790* |
| And, as a signal sound, if others like them peradventure |  |
| Sailed on those gloomy and midnight streams, blew a blast on his bugle. |  |
| Wild through the dark colonnades and corridors leafy the blast rang, |  |
| Breaking the seal of silence, and giving tongues to the forest. |  |
| Soundless above them the banners of moss just stirred to the music. | *795* |
| Multitudinous echoes awoke and died in the distance, |  |
| Over the watery floor, and beneath the reverberant branches; |  |
| But not a voice replied; no answer came from the darkness; |  |
| And, when the echoes had ceased, like a sense of pain was the silence. |  |
| Then Evangeline slept; but the boatmen rowed through the midnight, | *800* |
| Silent at times, then singing familiar Canadian boat-songs, |  |
| Such as they sang of old on their own Acadian rivers, |  |
| While through the night were heard the mysterious sounds of the desert, |  |
| Far off,—indistinct,—as of wave or wind in the forest, |  |
| Mixed with the whoop of the crane and the roar of the grim alligator. | *805* |
|   |  |
|   Thus ere another noon they emerged from the shades; and before them |  |
| Lay, in the golden sun, the lakes of the Atchafalaya. |  |
| Water-lilies in myriads rocked on the slight undulations |  |
| Made by the passing oars, and, resplendent in beauty, the lotus |  |
| Lifted her golden crown above the heads of the boatmen. | *810* |
| Faint was the air with the odorous breath of magnolia blossoms, |  |
| And with the heat of noon; and numberless sylvan islands, |  |
| Fragrant and thickly embowered with blossoming hedges of roses, |  |
| Near to whose shores they glided along, invited to slumber. |  |
| Soon by the fairest of these their weary oars were suspended. | *815* |
| Under the boughs of Wachita willows, that grew by the margin, |  |
| Safely their boat was moored; and scattered about on the greensward, |  |
| Tired with their midnight toil, the weary travellers slumbered. |  |
| Over them vast and high extended the cope of a cedar. |  |
| Swinging from its great arms, the trumpet-flower and the grapevine | *820* |
| Hung their ladder of ropes aloft like the ladder of Jacob, |  |
| On whose pendulous stairs the angels ascending, descending, |  |
| Were the swift humming-birds, that flitted from blossom to blossom. |  |
| Such was the vision Evangeline saw as she slumbered beneath it. |  |
| Filled was her heart with love, and the dawn of an opening heaven | *825* |
| Lighted her soul in sleep with the glory of regions celestial. |  |
|   |  |
|   Nearer, and ever nearer, among the numberless islands, |  |
| Darted a light, swift boat, that sped away o’er the water, |  |
| Urged on its course by the sinewy arms of hunters and trappers. |  |
| Northward its prow was turned, to the land of the bison and beaver. | *830* |
| At the helm sat a youth, with countenance thoughtful and careworn. |  |
| Dark and neglected locks overshadowed his brow, and a sadness |  |
| Somewhat beyond his years on his face was legibly written. |  |
| Gabriel was it, who, weary with waiting, unhappy and restless, |  |
| Sought in the Western wilds oblivion of self and of sorrow. | *835* |
| Swiftly they glided along, close under the lee of the island, |  |
| But by the opposite bank, and behind a screen of palmettos, |  |
| So that they saw not the boat, where it lay concealed in the willows; |  |
| All undisturbed by the dash of their oars, and unseen, were the sleepers. |  |
| Angel of God was there none to awaken the slumbering maiden. | *840* |
| Swiftly they glided away, like the shade of a cloud on the prairie. |  |
| After the sound of their oars on the tholes had died in the distance, |  |
| As from a magic trance the sleepers awoke, and the maiden |  |
| Said with a sigh to the friendly priest, ‘O Father Felician! |  |
| Something says in my heart that near me Gabriel wanders. | *845* |
| Is it a foolish dream, an idle and vague superstition? |  |
| Or has an angel passed, and revealed the truth to my spirit?’ |  |
| Then, with a blush, she added, ‘Alas for my credulous fancy! |  |
| Unto ears like thine such words as these have no meaning.’ |  |
| But made answer the reverend man, and he smiled as he answered,— | *850* |
| ‘Daughter, thy words are not idle; nor are they to me without meaning. |  |
| Feeling is deep and still; and the word that floats on the surface |  |
| Is as the tossing buoy, that betrays where the anchor is hidden. |  |
| Therefore trust to thy heart, and to what the world calls illusions. |  |
| Gabriel truly is near thee; for not far away to the southward, | *855* |
| On the banks of the Têche, are the towns of St. Maur and St. Martin. |  |
| There the long-wandering bride shall be given again to her bridegroom, |  |
| There the long-absent pastor regain his flock and his sheepfold. |  |
| Beautiful is the land, with its prairies and forests of fruit-trees; |  |
| Under the feet a garden of flowers, and the bluest of heavens | *860* |
| Bending above, and resting its dome on the walls of the forest. |  |
| They who dwell there have named it the Eden of Louisiana!’ |  |
|   |  |
|   With these words of cheer they arose and continued their journey. |  |
| Softly the evening came. The sun from the western horizon |  |
| Like a magician extended his golden wand o’er the landscape; | *865* |
| Twinkling vapors arose; and sky and water and forest |  |
| Seemed all on fire at the touch, and melted and mingled together. |  |
| Hanging between two skies, a cloud with edges of silver, |  |
| Floated the boat, with its dripping oars, on the motionless water. |  |
| Filled was Evangeline’s heart with inexpressible sweetness. | *870* |
| Touched by the magic spell, the sacred fountains of feeling |  |
| Glowed with the light of love, as the skies and waters around her. |  |
| Then from a neighboring thicket the mocking-bird, wildest of singers, |  |
| Swinging aloft on a willow spray that hung o’er the water, |  |
| Shook from his little throat such floods of delirious music, | *875* |
| That the whole air and the woods and the waves seemed silent to listen. |  |
| Plaintive at first were the tones and sad: then soaring to madness |  |
| Seemed they to follow or guide the revel of frenzied Bacchantes. |  |
|   |  |
| Single notes were then heard, in sorrowful, low lamentation; |  |
| Till, having gathered them all, he flung them abroad in derision, | *880* |
| As when, after a storm, a gust of wind through the tree-tops |  |
| Shakes down the rattling rain in a crystal shower on the branches. |  |
| With such a prelude as this, and hearts that throbbed with emotion, |  |
| Slowly they entered the Têche, where it flows through the green Opelousas, |  |
| And, through the amber air, above the crest of the woodland, | *885* |
| Saw the column of smoke that arose from a neighboring dwelling;— |  |
| Sounds of a horn they heard, and the distant lowing of cattle. |  |
|   |  |
| IIINear to the bank of the river, o’ershadowed by oaks, from whose branches |  |
| Garlands of Spanish moss and of mystic mistletoe flaunted, |  |
| Such as the Druids cut down with golden hatchets at Yuletide, | *890* |
| Stood, secluded and still, the house of the herdsman. A garden |  |
| Girded it round about with a belt of luxuriant blossoms, |  |
| Filling the air with fragrance. The house itself was of timbers |  |
| Hewn from the cypress-tree, and carefully fitted together. |  |
| Large and low was the roof; and on slender columns supported, | *895* |
| Rose-wreathed, vine-encircled, a broad and spacious veranda, |  |
| Haunt of the humming-bird and the bee, extended around it. |  |
| At each end of the house, amid the flowers of the garden, |  |
| Stationed the dove-cots were, as love’s perpetual symbol, |  |
| Scenes of endless wooing and endless contentions of rivals. | *900* |
| Silence reigned o’er the place. The line of shadow and sunshine |  |
| Ran near the tops of the trees; but the house itself was in shadow, |  |
| And from its chimney-top, ascending and slowly expanding |  |
| Into the evening air, a thin blue column of smoke rose. |  |
| In the rear of the house, from the garden gate, ran a pathway | *905* |
| Through the great groves of oak to the skirts of the limitless prairie, |  |
| Into whose sea of flowers the sun was slowly descending. |  |
| Full in his track of light, like ships with shadowy canvas |  |
| Hanging loose from their spars in a motionless calm in the tropics, |  |
| Stood a cluster of trees, with tangled cordage of grape-vines. | *910* |
|   |  |
|   Just where the woodlands met the flowery surf of the prairie, |  |
| Mounted upon his horse, with Spanish saddle and stirrups, |  |
| Sat a herdsman, arrayed in gaiters and doublet of deerskin. |  |
| Broad and brown was the face that from under the Spanish sombrero |  |
| Gazed on the peaceful scene, with the lordly look of its master. | *915* |
| Round about him were numberless herds of kine, that were grazing |  |
| Quietly in the meadows, and breathing the vapory freshness |  |
| That uprose from the river, and spread itself over the landscape. |  |
| Slowly lifting the horn that hung at his side, and expanding |  |
| Fully his broad, deep chest, he blew a blast, that resounded | *920* |
| Wildly and sweet and far, through the still damp air of the evening. |  |
| Suddenly out of the grass the long white horns of the cattle |  |
| Rose like flakes of foam on the adverse currents of ocean. |  |
| Silent a moment they gazed, then bellowing rushed o’er the prairie, |  |
| And the whole mass became a cloud, a shade in the distance. | *925* |
| Then, as the herdsman turned to the house, through the gate of the garden |  |
| Saw he the forms of the priest and the maiden advancing to meet him. |  |
| Suddenly down from his horse he sprang in amazement, and forward |  |
| Rushed with extended arms and exclamations of wonder; |  |
| When they beheld his face, they recognized Basil the blacksmith. | *930* |
| Hearty his welcome was, as he led his guests to the garden. |  |
| There in an arbor of roses with endless question and answer |  |
| Gave they vent to their hearts, and renewed their friendly embraces, |  |
| Laughing and weeping by turns, or sitting silent and thoughtful. |  |
| Thoughtful, for Gabriel came not; and now dark doubts and misgivings | *935* |
| Stole o’er the maiden’s heart; and Basil, somewhat embarrassed, |  |
| Broke the silence and said, ‘If you came by the Atchafalaya, |  |
| How have you nowhere encountered my Gabriel’s boat on the bayous?’ |  |
| Over Evangeline’s face at the words of Basil a shade passed. |  |
| Tears came into her eyes, and she said, with a tremulous accent, | *940* |
| ‘Gone? is Gabriel gone?’ and, concealing her face on his shoulder, |  |
| All her o’erburdened heart gave way, and she wept and lamented. |  |
| Then the good Basil said,—and his voice grew blithe as he said it,— |  |
| ‘Be of good cheer, my child; it is only to-day he departed. |  |
| Foolish boy! he has left me alone with my herds and my horses. | *945* |
| Moody and restless grown, and tried and troubled, his spirit |  |
| Could no longer endure the calm of this quiet existence, |  |
| Thinking ever of thee, uncertain and sorrowful ever, |  |
| Ever silent, or speaking only of thee and his troubles, |  |
| He at length had become so tedious to men and to maidens, | *950* |
| Tedious even to me, that at length I bethought me, and sent him |  |
| Unto the town of Adayes to trade for mules with the Spaniards. |  |
| Thence he will follow the Indian trails to the Ozark Mountains, |  |
| Hunting for furs in the forests, on rivers trapping the beaver. |  |
| Therefore be of good cheer; we will follow the fugitive lover; | *955* |
| He is not far on his way, and the Fates and the streams are against him. |  |
| Up and away to-morrow, and through the red dew of the morning |  |
| We will follow him fast, and bring him back to his prison.’ |  |
|   |  |
|   Then glad voices were heard, and up from the banks of the river, |  |
| Borne aloft on his comrades’ arms, came Michael the fiddler. | *960* |
| Long under Basil’s roof had he lived like a god on Olympus, |  |
| Having no other care than dispensing music to mortals. |  |
| Far renowned was he for his silver locks and his fiddle. |  |
| ‘Long live Michael,’ they cried, ‘our brave Acadian minstrel!’ |  |
| As they bore him aloft in triumphal procession; and straightway | *965* |
| Father Felician advanced with Evangeline, greeting the old man |  |
| Kindly and oft, and recalling the past, while Basil, enraptured, |  |
| Hailed with hilarious joy his old companions and gossips, |  |
| Laughing loud and long, and embracing mothers and daughters. |  |
| Much they marvelled to see the wealth of the ci-devant blacksmith, | *970* |
| All his domains and his herds, and his patriarchal demeanor; |  |
| Much they marvelled to hear his tales of the soil and the climate, |  |
| And of the prairies, whose numberless herds were his who would take them; |  |
| Each one thought in his heart, that he, too, would go and do likewise. |  |
| Thus they ascended the steps, and crossing the breezy veranda, | *975* |
| Entered the hall of the house, where already the supper of Basil |  |
| Waited his late return; and they rested and feasted together. |  |
|   |  |
|   Over the joyous feast the sudden darkness descended. |  |
| All was silent without, and, illuming the landscape with silver, |  |
| Fair rose the dewy moon and the myriad stars; but within doors, | *980* |
| Brighter than these, shone the faces of friends in the glimmering lamplight. |  |
| Then from his station aloft, at the head of the table, the herdsman |  |
| Poured forth his heart and his wine together in endless profusion. |  |
| Lighting his pipe, that was filled with sweet Natchitoches tobacco, |  |
| Thus he spake to his guests, who listened, and smiled as they listened:— | *985* |
| ‘Welcome once more, my friends, who long have been friendless and homeless, |  |
| Welcome once more to a home, that is better perchance than the old one! |  |
| Here no hungry winter congeals our blood like the rivers; |  |
| Here no stony ground provokes the wrath of the farmer. |  |
| Smoothly the ploughshare runs through the soil, as a keel through the water. | *990* |
| All the year round the orange-groves are in blossom; and grass grows |  |
| More in a single night than a whole Canadian summer. |  |
| Here, too, numberless herds run wild and unclaimed in the prairies; |  |
| Here, too, lands may be had for the asking, and forests of timber |  |
| With a few blows of the axe are hewn and framed into houses. | *995* |
| After your houses are built, and your fields are yellow with harvests, |  |
| No King George of England shall drive you away from your homesteads, |  |
| Burning your dwellings and barns, and stealing your farms and your cattle.’ |  |
| Speaking these words, he blew a wrathful cloud from his nostrils, |  |
| While his huge, brown hand came thundering down on the table, | *1000* |
| So that the guests all started; and Father Felician, astounded, |  |
| Suddenly paused, with a pinch of snuff half-way to his nostrils. |  |
| But the brave Basil resumed, and his words were milder and gayer:— |  |
| ‘Only beware of the fever, my friends, beware of the fever! |  |
| For it is not like that of our cold Acadian climate, | *1005* |
| Cured by wearing a spider hung round one’s neck in a nutshell!’ |  |
| Then there were voices heard at the door, and footsteps approaching |  |
| Sounded upon the stairs and the floor of the breezy veranda. |  |
| It was the neighboring Creoles and small Acadian planters, |  |
| Who had been summoned all to the house of Basil the Herdsman. | *1010* |
| Merry the meeting was of ancient comrades and neighbors: |  |
| Friend clasped friend in his arms; and they who before were as strangers, |  |
| Meeting in exile, became straightway as friends to each other, |  |
| Drawn by the gentle bond of a common country together. |  |
| But in the neighboring hall a strain of music, proceeding | *1015* |
| From the accordant strings of Michael’s melodious fiddle, |  |
| Broke up all further speech. Away, like children delighted, |  |
| All things forgotten beside, they gave themselves to the maddening |  |
| Whirl of the giddy dance, as it swept and swayed to the music, |  |
| Dreamlike, with beaming eyes and the rush of fluttering garments. | *1020* |
|   |  |
|   Meanwhile, apart, at the head of the hall, the priest and the herdsman |  |
| Sat, conversing together of past and present and future; |  |
| While Evangeline stood like one entranced, for within her |  |
| Olden memories rose, and loud in the midst of the music |  |
| Heard she the sound of the sea, and an irrepressible sadness | *1025* |
| Came o’er her heart, and unseen she stole forth into the garden. |  |
| Beautiful was the night. Behind the black wall of the forest, |  |
| Tipping its summit with silver, arose the moon. On the river |  |
| Fell here and there through the branches a tremulous gleam of the moonlight, |  |
| Like the sweet thoughts of love on a darkened and devious spirit. | *1030* |
| Nearer and round about her, the manifold flowers of the garden |  |
| Poured out their souls in odors, that were their prayers and confessions |  |
| Unto the night, as it went its way, like a silent Carthusian. |  |
| Fuller of fragrance than they, and as heavy with shadows and nightdews, |  |
| Hung the heart of the maiden. The calm and the magical moonlight | *1035* |
| Seemed to inundate her soul with indefinable longings, |  |
| As, through the garden-gate, and beneath the shade of the oak-trees, |  |
| Passed she along the path to the edge of the measureless prairie. |  |
| Silent it lay, with a silvery haze upon it, and fire-flies |  |
| Gleamed and floated away in mingled and infinite numbers. | *1040* |
| Over her head the stars, the thoughts of God in the heavens, |  |
| Shone on the eyes of man, who had ceased to marvel and worship, |  |
| Save when a blazing comet was seen on the walls of that temple, |  |
| As if a hand had appeared and written upon them, ‘Upharsin.’ |  |
| And the soul of the maiden, between the stars and the fire-flies, | *1045* |
| Wandered alone, and she cried, ‘O Gabriel! O my beloved! |  |
| Art thou so near unto me, and yet I cannot behold thee? |  |
| Art thou so near unto me, and yet thy voice does not reach me? |  |
| Ah! how often thy feet have trod this path to the prairie! |  |
| Ah! how often thine eyes have looked on the woodlands around me! | *1050* |
| Ah! how often beneath this oak, returning from labor, |  |
| Thou hast lain down to rest, and to dream of me in thy slumbers! |  |
| When shall these eyes behold, these arms be folded about thee?’ |  |
| Loud and sudden and near the notes of a whippoorwill sounded |  |
| Like a flute in the woods; and anon, through the neighboring thickets, | *1055* |
| Farther and farther away it floated and dropped into silence. |  |
| ‘Patience!’ whispered the oaks from oracular caverns of darkness: |  |
| And, from the moonlit meadow, a sigh responded, ‘To-morrow!’ |  |
|   |  |
|   Bright rose the sun next day; and all the flowers of the garden |  |
| Bathed his shining feet with their tears, and anointed his tresses | *1060* |
| With the delicious balm that they bore in their vases of crystal. |  |
| ‘Farewell!’ said the priest, as he stood at the shadowy threshold; |  |
| ‘See that you bring us the Prodigal Son from his fasting and famine, |  |
| And, too, the Foolish Virgin, who slept when the bridegroom was coming.’ |  |
| ‘Farewell!’ answered the maiden, and, smiling, with Basil descended | *1065* |
| Down to the river’s brink, where the boatmen already were waiting. |  |
| Thus beginning their journey with morning, and sunshine, and gladness, |  |
| Swiftly they followed the flight of him who was speeding before them, |  |
| Blown by the blast of fate like a dead leaf over the desert. |  |
| Not that day, nor the next, nor yet the day that succeeded, | *1070* |
| Found they the trace of his course, in lake or forest or river, |  |
| Nor, after many days, had they found him; but vague and uncertain |  |
| Rumors alone were their guides through a wild and desolate country; |  |
| Till, at the little inn of the Spanish town of Adayes, |  |
| Weary and worn, they alighted, and learned from the garrulous landlord, | *1075* |
| That on the day before, with horses and guides and companions, |  |
| Gabriel left the village, and took the road of the prairies. |  |
|   |  |
| IVFar in the West there lies a desert land, where the mountains |  |
| Lift, through perpetual snows, their lofty and luminous summits. |  |
| Down from their jagged, deep ravines, where the gorge, like a gateway, | *1080* |
| Opens a passage rude to the wheels of the emigrant’s wagon, |  |
| Westward the Oregon flows and the Walleway and Owyhee. |  |
| Eastward, with devious course, among the Wind-river Mountains, |  |
| Through the Sweet-water Valley precipitate leaps the Nebraska; |  |
| And to the south, from Fontaine-qui-bout and the Spanish sierras, | *1085* |
| Fretted with sands and rocks, and swept by the wind of the desert, |  |
| Numberless torrents, with ceaseless sound, descend to the ocean, |  |
| Like the great chords of a harp, in loud and solemn vibrations. |  |
| Spreading between these streams are the wondrous, beautiful prairies; |  |
| Billowy bays of grass ever rolling in shadow and sunshine, | *1090* |
| Bright with luxuriant clusters of roses and purple amorphas. |  |
| Over them wandered the buffalo herds, and the elk and the roebuck; |  |
| Over them wandered the wolves, and herds of riderless horses; |  |
| Fires that blast and blight, and winds that are weary with travel; |  |
| Over them wander the scattered tribes of Ishmael’s children, | *1095* |
| Staining the desert with blood; and above their terrible war-trails. |  |
| Circles and sails aloft, on pinions majestic, the vulture, |  |
| Like the implacable soul of a chieftain slaughtered in battle, |  |
| By invisible stairs ascending and scaling the heavens. |  |
| Here and there rise smokes from the camps of these savage marauders; | *1100* |
| Here and there rise groves from the margins of swift-running rivers; |  |
| And the grim, taciturn bear, the anchorite monk of the desert, |  |
| Climbs down their dark ravines to dig for roots by the brook-side, |  |
| And over all is the sky, the clear and crystalline heaven, |  |
| Like the protecting hand of God inverted above them. | *1105* |
|   |  |
|   Into this wonderful land, at the base of the Ozark Mountains, |  |
| Gabriel far had entered, with hunters and trappers behind him. |  |
| Day after day, with their Indian guides, the maiden and Basil |  |
| Followed his flying steps, and thought each day to o’ertake him. |  |
| Sometimes they saw, or thought they saw, the smoke of his camp-fire | *1110* |
| Rise in the morning air from the distant plain; but at nightfall, |  |
| When they had reached the place they found only embers and ashes. |  |
| And, though their hearts were sad at times and their bodies were weary, |  |
| Hope still guided them on, as the magic Fata Morgana |  |
| Showed them her lakes of light, that retreated and vanished before them. | *1115* |
|   |  |
|   Once, as they sat by their evening fire, there silently entered |  |
| Into their little camp an Indian woman, whose features |  |
| Wore deep traces of sorrow, and patience as great as her sorrow. |  |
| She was a Shawnee woman returning home to her people, |  |
| From the far-off hunting-grounds of the cruel Camanches, | *1120* |
| Where her Canadian husband, a Coureur-des-Bois, had been murdered. |  |
| Touched were their hearts at her story, and warmest and friendliest welcome |  |
| Gave they, with words of cheer, and she sat and feasted among them |  |
| On the buffalo-meat and the venison cooked on the embers. |  |
| But when their meal was done, and Basil and all his companions, | *1125* |
| Worn with the long day’s march and the chase of the deer and the bison, |  |
| Stretched themselves on the ground, and slept where the quivering fire-light |  |
| Flashed on their swarthy cheeks, and their forms wrapped up in their blankets, |  |
| Then at the door of Evangeline’s tent she sat and repeated |  |
| Slowly, with soft, low voice, and the charm of her Indian accent, | *1130* |
| All the tale of her love, with its pleasures, and pains, and reverses. |  |
| Much Evangeline wept at the tale, and to know that another |  |
| Hapless heart like her own had loved and had been disappointed. |  |
| Moved to the depths of her soul by pity and woman’s compassion, |  |
| Yet in her sorrow pleased that one who had suffered was near her, | *1135* |
| She in turn related her love and all its disasters. |  |
| Mute with wonder the Shawnee sat, and when she had ended |  |
| Still was mute; but at length, as if a mysterious horror |  |
| Passed through her brain, she spake, and repeated the tale of the Mowis; |  |
| Mowis, the bridegroom of snow, who won and wedded a maiden, | *1140* |
| But, when the morning came, arose and passed from the wigwam, |  |
| Fading and melting away and dissolving into the sunshine, |  |
| Till she beheld him no more, though she followed far into the forest. |  |
| Then, in those sweet, low tones, that seemed like a weird incantation, |  |
| Told she the tale of the fair Lilinau, who was wooed by a phantom, | *1145* |
| That through the pines o’er her father’s lodge, in the hush of the twilight, |  |
| Breathed like the evening wind, and whispered love to the maiden, |  |
| Till she followed his green and waving plume through the forest, |  |
| And nevermore returned, nor was seen again by her people. |  |
| Silent with wonder and strange surprise, Evangeline listened | *1150* |
| To the soft flow of her magical words, till the region around her |  |
| Seemed like enchanted ground, and her swarthy guest the enchantress. |  |
| Slowly over the tops of the Ozark Mountains the moon rose, |  |
| Lighting the little tent, and with a mysterious splendor |  |
| Touching the sombre leaves, and embracing and filling the woodland. | *1155* |
| With a delicious sound the brook rushed by, and the branches |  |
| Swayed and sighed overhead in scarcely audible whispers. |  |
| Filled with the thoughts of love was Evangeline’s heart, but a secret, |  |
| Subtile sense crept in of pain and indefinite terror, |  |
| As the cold, poisonous snake creeps into the nest of the swallow. | *1160* |
| It was no earthly fear. A breath from the region of spirits |  |
| Seemed to float in the air of night; and she felt for a moment |  |
| That, like the Indian maid, she, too, was pursuing a phantom. |  |
| With this thought she slept, and the fear and the phantom had vanished. |  |
|   |  |
|   Early upon the morrow the march was resumed; and the Shawnee | *1165* |
| Said, as they journeyed along, ‘On the western slope of these mountains |  |
| Dwells in his little village the Black Robe chief of the Mission. |  |
| Much he teaches the people, and tells them of Mary and Jesus. |  |
| Loud laugh their hearts with joy, and weep with pain, as they hear him.’ |  |
| Then, with a sudden and secret emotion, Evangeline answered, | *1170* |
| ‘Let us go to the Mission, for there good tidings await us!’ |  |
| Thither they turned their steeds; and behind a spur of the mountains, |  |
| Just as the sun went down, they heard a murmur of voices, |  |
| And in a meadow green and broad, by the bank of a river, |  |
| Saw the tents of the Christians, the tents of the Jesuit Mission. | *1175* |
| Under a towering oak, that stood in the midst of the village, |  |
| Knelt the Black Robe chief with his children. A crucifix fastened |  |
| High on the trunk of the tree, and overshadowed by grapevines, |  |
| Looked with its agonized face on the multitude kneeling beneath it. |  |
| This was their rural chapel. Aloft, through the intricate arches | *1180* |
| Of its aerial roof, arose the chant of their vespers, |  |
| Mingling its notes with the soft susurrus and sighs of the branches. |  |
| Silent, with heads uncovered, the travellers, nearer approaching, |  |
| Knelt on the swarded floor, and joined in the evening devotions. |  |
| But when the service was done, and the benediction had fallen | *1185* |
| Forth from the hands of the priest, like seed from the hands of the sower, |  |
| Slowly the reverend man advanced to the strangers, and bade them |  |
| Welcome; and when they replied, he smiled with benignant expression, |  |
| Hearing the homelike sounds of his mother-tongue in the forest, |  |
| And, with words of kindness, conducted them into his wigwam. | *1190* |
| There upon mats and skins they reposed, and on cakes of the maize-ear |  |
| Feasted, and slaked their thirst from the water-gourd of the teacher. |  |
| Soon was their story told; and the priest with solemnity answered:— |  |
| ‘Nor six suns have risen and set since Gabriel, seated |  |
| On this mat by my side, where now the maiden reposes, | *1195* |
| Told me this same sad tale; then arose and continued his journey!’ |  |
| Soft was the voice of the priest, and he spake with an accent of kindness; |  |
| But on Evangeline’s heart fell his words as in winter the snow-flakes |  |
| Fall into some lone nest from which the birds have departed. |  |
| ‘Far to the north he has gone,’ continued the priest; ‘but in autumn, | *1200* |
| When the chase is done, will return again to the Mission.’ |  |
| Then Evangeline said, and her voice was meek and submissive, |  |
| ‘Let me remain with thee, for my soul is sad and afflicted.’ |  |
| So seemed it wise and well unto all; and betimes on the morrow, |  |
| Mounting his Mexican steed, with his Indian guides and companions, | *1205* |
| Homeward Basil returned, and Evangeline stayed at the Mission. |  |
|   |  |
|   Slowly, slowly, slowly the days succeeded each other,— |  |
| Days and weeks and months; and the fields of maize that were springing |  |
| Green from the ground when a stranger she came, now waving above her, |  |
| Lifted their slender shafts, with leaves interlacing, and forming | *1210* |
| Cloisters for mendicant crows and granaries pillaged by squirrels. |  |
| Then in the golden weather the maize was husked, and the maidens |  |
| Blushed at each blood-red ear, for that betokened a lover, |  |
| But at the crooked laughed, and called it a thief in the cornfield. |  |
| Even the blood-red ear to Evangeline brought not her lover. | *1215* |
| ‘Patience!’ the priest would say; ‘have faith, and thy prayer will be answered! |  |
| Look at this vigorous plant that lifts its head from the meadow, |  |
| See how its leaves are turned to the north, as true as the magnet; |  |
| This is the compass-flower, that the finger of God has planted |  |
| Here in the houseless wild, to direct the traveller’s journey | *1220* |
| Over the sea-like, pathless, limitless waste of the desert. |  |
| Such in the soul of man is faith. The blossoms of passion, |  |
| Gay and luxuriant flowers, are brighter and fuller of fragrance, |  |
| But they beguile us, and lead us astray, and their odor is deadly. |  |
| Only this humble plant can guide us here, and hereafter | *1225* |
| Crown us with asphodel flowers, that are wet with the dews of nepenthe.’ |  |
|   |  |
|   So came the autumn, and passed, and the winter,—yet Gabriel came not; |  |
| Blossomed the opening spring, and the notes of the robin and bluebird |  |
| Sounded sweet upon wold and in wood, yet Gabriel came not. |  |
| But on the breath of the summer winds a rumor was wafted | *1230* |
| Sweeter than song of bird, or hue or odor of blossom. |  |
| Far to the north and east, it said, in the Michigan forests, |  |
| Gabriel had his lodge by the banks of the Saginaw River. |  |
| And, with returning guides, that sought the lakes of St. Lawrence, |  |
| Saying a sad farewell, Evangeline went from the Mission. | *1235* |
| When over weary ways, by long and perilous marches, |  |
| She had attained at length the depths of the Michigan forests, |  |
| Found she the hunter’s lodge deserted and fallen to ruin! |  |
|   |  |
|   Thus did the long sad years glide on, and in seasons and places |  |
| Divers and distant far was seen the wandering maiden;— | *1240* |
| Now in the Tents of Grace of the meek Moravian Missions, |  |
| Now in the noisy camps and the battle-fields of the army, |  |
| Now in secluded hamlets, in towns and populous cities. |  |
| Like a phantom she came, and passed away unremembered. |  |
| Fair was she and young, when in hope began the long journey; | *1245* |
| Faded was she and old, when in disappointment it ended. |  |
| Each succeeding year stole something away from her beauty, |  |
| Leaving behind it, broader and deeper, the gloom and the shadow. |  |
| Then there appeared and spread faint streaks of gray o’er her forehead, |  |
| Dawn of another life, that broke o’er her earthly horizon, | *1250* |
| As in the eastern sky the first faint streaks of the morning. |  |
|   |  |
| VIn that delightful land which is washed by the Delaware waters, |  |
| Guarding in sylvan shades the name of Penn the apostle, |  |
| Stands on the banks of its beautiful stream the city he founded. |  |
| There all the air is balm, and the peach is the emblem of beauty, | *1255* |
| And the streets still re-echo the names of the trees of the forest, |  |
| As if they fain would appease the Dryads whose haunts they molested. |  |
| There from the troubled sea had Evangeline landed, an exile, |  |
| Finding among the children of Penn a home and a country. |  |
| There old René Leblanc had died; and when he departed, | *1260* |
| Saw at his side only one of all his hundred descendants. |  |
| Something at least there was in the friendly streets of the city, |  |
| Something that spake to her heart, and made her no longer a stranger; |  |
| And her ear was pleased with the Thee and Thou of the Quakers, |  |
| For it recalled the past, the old Acadian country, | *1265* |
| Where all men were equal, and all were brothers and sisters. |  |
| So, when the fruitless search, the disappointed endeavor, |  |
| Ended, to recommence no more upon earth, uncomplaining, |  |
| Thither, as leaves to the light, were turned her thoughts and her footsteps. |  |
| As from the mountain’s top the rainy mists of the morning | *1270* |
| Roll away, and afar we behold the landscape below us, |  |
| Sun-illumined, with shining rivers and cities and hamlets, |  |
| So fell the mists from her mind, and she saw the world far below her, |  |
| Dark no longer, but all illumined with love; and the pathway |  |
| Which she had climbed so far, lying smooth and fair in the distance. | *1275* |
| Gabriel was not forgotten. Within her heart was his image, |  |
| Clothed in the beauty of love and youth, as last she beheld him, |  |
| Only more beautiful made by his death-like silence and absence. |  |
| Into her thoughts of him time entered not, for it was not. |  |
| Over him years had no power; he was not changed, but transfigured; | *1280* |
| He had become to her heart as one who is dead, and not absent; |  |
| Patience and abnegation of self, and devotion to others, |  |
| This was the lesson a life of trial and sorrow had taught her. |  |
| So was her love diffused, but, like to some odorous spices, |  |
| Suffered no waste nor loss, though filling the air with aroma. | *1285* |
| Other hope had she none, nor wish in life, but to follow |  |
| Meekly, with reverent steps, the sacred feet of her Saviour. |  |
| Thus many years she lived as a Sister of Mercy, frequenting |  |
| Lonely and wretched roofs in the crowded lanes of the city, |  |
| Where distress and want concealed themselves from the sunlight, | *1290* |
| Where disease and sorrow in garrets languished neglected. |  |
| Night after night, when the world was asleep, as the watchman repeated |  |
| Loud, through the gusty streets, that all was well in the city, |  |
| High at some lonely window he saw the light of her taper. |  |
| Day after day, in the gray of the dawn, as slow through the suburbs | *1295* |
| Plodded the German farmer, with flowers and fruits for the market. |  |
| Met he that meek, pale face, returning home from its watchings. |  |
|   |  |
|   Then it came to pass that a pestilence fell on the city, |  |
| Presaged by wondrous signs, and mostly by flocks of wild pigeons, |  |
| Darkening the sun in their flight, with naught in their craws but an acorn. | *1300* |
| And, as the tides of the sea arise in the month of September, |  |
| Flooding some silver stream, till it spreads to a lake in the meadow, |  |
| So death flooded life, and, o’erflowing its natural margin, |  |
| Spread to a brackish lake, the silver stream of existence. |  |
| Wealth had no power to bribe, nor beauty to charm, the oppressor; | *1305* |
| But all perished alike beneath the scourge of his anger;— |  |
| Only, alas! the poor, who had neither friends nor attendants, |  |
| Crept away to die in the almshouse, home of the homeless. |  |
| Then in the suburbs it stood, in the midst of meadows and woodlands;— |  |
| Now the city surrounds it; but still, with its gateway and wicket | *1310* |
| Meek, in the midst of splendor, its humble walls seemed to echo |  |
| Softly the words of the Lord: ‘The poor ye always have with you.’ |  |
| Thither, by night and by day, came the Sister of Mercy. The dying |  |
| Looked up into her face, and thought, indeed, to behold there |  |
| Gleams of celestial light encircle her forehead with splendor, | *1315* |
| Such as the artist paints o’er the brows of saints and apostles, |  |
| Or such as hangs by night o’er a city seen at a distance. |  |
| Unto their eyes it seemed the lamps of the city celestial, |  |
| Into whose shining gates erelong their spirits would enter. |  |
|   |  |
|   Thus, on a Sabbath morn, through the streets, deserted and silent, | *1320* |
| Wending her quiet way, she entered the door of the almshouse. |  |
| Sweet on the summer air was the odor of flowers in the garden; |  |
| And she paused on her way to gather the fairest among them, |  |
| That the dying once more might rejoice in their fragrance and beauty. |  |
| Then, as she mounted the stairs to the corridors, cooled by the east-wind, | *1325* |
| Distant and soft on her ear fell the chimes from the belfry of Christ Church, |  |
| While, intermingled with these, across the meadows were wafted |  |
| Sounds of psalms, that were sung by the Swedes in their church at Wicaco. |  |
| Soft as descending wings fell the calm of the hour on her spirit: |  |
| Something within her said, ‘At length thy trials are ended;’ | *1330* |
| And, with light in her looks, she entered the chambers of sickness. |  |
| Noiselessly moved about the assiduous, careful attendants, |  |
| Moistening the feverish lip, and the aching brow, and in silence |  |
| Closing the sightless eyes of the dead, and concealing their faces, |  |
| Where on their pallets they lay, like drifts of snow by the roadside. | *1335* |
| Many a languid head, upraised as Evangeline entered, |  |
| Turned on its pillow of pain to gaze while she passed, for her presence |  |
| Fell on their hearts like a ray of the sun on the walls of a prison. |  |
| And, as she looked around, she saw how Death, the consoler, |  |
| Laying his hand upon many a heart, had healed it forever. | *1340* |
| Many familiar forms had disappeared in the night time; |  |
| Vacant their places were, or filled already by strangers. |  |
|   |  |
|   Suddenly, as if arrested by fear or a feeling of wonder, |  |
| Still she stood, with her colorless lips apart, while a shudder |  |
| Ran through her frame, and, forgotten, the flowerets dropped from her fingers, | *1345* |
| And from her eyes and cheeks the light and bloom of the morning. |  |
| Then there escaped from her lips a cry of such terrible anguish, |  |
| That the dying heard it, and started up from their pillows. |  |
| On the pallet before her was stretched the form of an old man. |  |
| Long, and thin, and gray were the locks that shaded his temples; | *1350* |
| But, as he lay in the morning light, his face for a moment |  |
| Seemed to assume once more the forms of its earlier manhood; |  |
| So are wont to be changed the faces of those who are dying. |  |
| Hot and red on his lips still burned the flush of the fever, |  |
| As if life, like the Hebrew, with blood had besprinkled its portals, | *1355* |
| That the Angel of Death might see the sign, and pass over. |  |
| Motionless, senseless, dying, he lay, and his spirit exhausted |  |
| Seemed to be sinking down through infinite depths in the darkness, |  |
| Darkness of slumber and death, forever sinking and sinking. |  |
| Then through those realms of shade, in multiplied reverberations, | *1360* |
| Heard he that cry of pain, and through the hush that succeeded |  |
| Whispered a gentle voice, in accents tender and saint-like, |  |
| ‘Gabriel! O my beloved!’ and died away into silence. |  |
| Then he beheld, in a dream, once more the home of his childhood; |  |
| Green Acadian meadows, with sylvan rivers among them, | *1365* |
| Village, and mountain, and woodlands; and, walking under their shadow, |  |
| As in the days of her youth, Evangeline rose in his vision. |  |
| Tears came into his eyes; and as slowly he lifted his eyelids, |  |
| Vanished the vision away, but Evangeline knelt by his bedside. |  |
| Vainly he strove to whisper her name, for the accents unuttered | *1370* |
| Died on his lips, and their motion revealed what his tongue would have spoken. |  |
| Vainly he strove to rise; and Evangeline, kneeling beside him. |  |
| Kissed his dying lips and laid his head on her bosom. |  |
| Sweet was the light of his eyes; but it suddenly sank into darkness, |  |
| As when a lamp is blown out by a gust of wind at a casement. | *1375* |
|   |  |
|   All was ended now, the hope, and the fear, and the sorrow, |  |
| All the aching of heart, the restless, unsatisfied longing, |  |
| All the dull, deep pain, and constant anguish of patience! |  |
| And, as she pressed once more the lifeless head to her bosom, |  |
| Meekly she bowed her own, and murmured, ‘Father, I thank thee!’ | *1380* |
|   |  |
| Still stands the forest primeval; but far away from its shadow, |  |
| Side by side, in their nameless graves, the lovers are sleeping. |  |
| Under the humble walls of the little Catholic churchyard, |  |
| In the heart of the city, they lie, unknown and unnoticed. |  |
| Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing beside them, | *1385* |
| Thousands of throbbing hearts, where theirs are at rest and forever, |  |
| Thousands of aching brains, where theirs no longer are busy, |  |
| Thousands of toiling hands, where theirs have ceased from their labors, |  |
| Thousands of weary feet, where theirs have completed their journey. |  |
|   |  |
|   Still stands the forest primeval; but under the shade of its branches | *1390* |
| Dwells another race, with other customs and language. |  |
| Only along the shore of the mournful and misty Atlantic |  |
| Linger a few Acadian peasants, whose fathers from exile |  |
| Wandered back to their native land to die in its bosom. |  |
| In the fisherman’s cot the wheel and the loom are still busy; | *1395* |
| Maidens still wear their Norman caps and their kirtles of homespun, |  |
| And by the evening fire repeat Evangeline’s story, |  |
| While from its rocky caverns the deep-voiced, neighboring ocean |  |
| Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest. |  |

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