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| English Poetry III: From Tennyson to Whitman. The Harvard Classics.  1909–14. |
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| **791. Evangeline** |
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| **Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)** |
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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 FIRST I  IN 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. |  | |  |  | | II  Now 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" \l "noteFN2) | *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. |  | |  |  | | III  Bent 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! |  | |  |  | | IV  Pleasantly 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. |  | |  |  | | V  Four 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 SECOND I  MANY 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" \l "noteFN3) |  | | 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* | |  |  | | II  It 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. |  | |  |  | | III  Near 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. |  | |  |  | | IV  Far 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. |  | |  |  | | V  In 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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