

LA SALLE

To Henri de Tonti

HEAR that whining cry!
A porcupine fretting the wilderness,
That sea of subtle sounds and silences,
The lispings leaves, the grace-notes of the rain,
The choral birds, the cry of timid things
When lightning's sudden rapier stabs the dark.
How solemn is the fluting of the winds
Whose clarion voice the thunder's monotone
Preludes, before the great crescendo bursts
To one wild blare of trumpet, cymbal, drum,—
The lesser throats of song all mute amid
The crash of that tremendous orchestra.

The virgin heart of this old wilderness
Is fickle as an April morn, now calm
As tropic night; anon, tossed and distraught
By all the wild artillery of the storm.

How voluble, in crowds, the speech of man,
But in the mighty woods, how pitiful!
And yet, I would my lips were eloquent
As hermit Peter's when he moved the kings
To match his ardour with their chivalry.
Then would we shake a riper, rosier fruit