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CANADIAN IDYLS,

NUMBER IV.

SPRING.

STONY CREEK.

BY

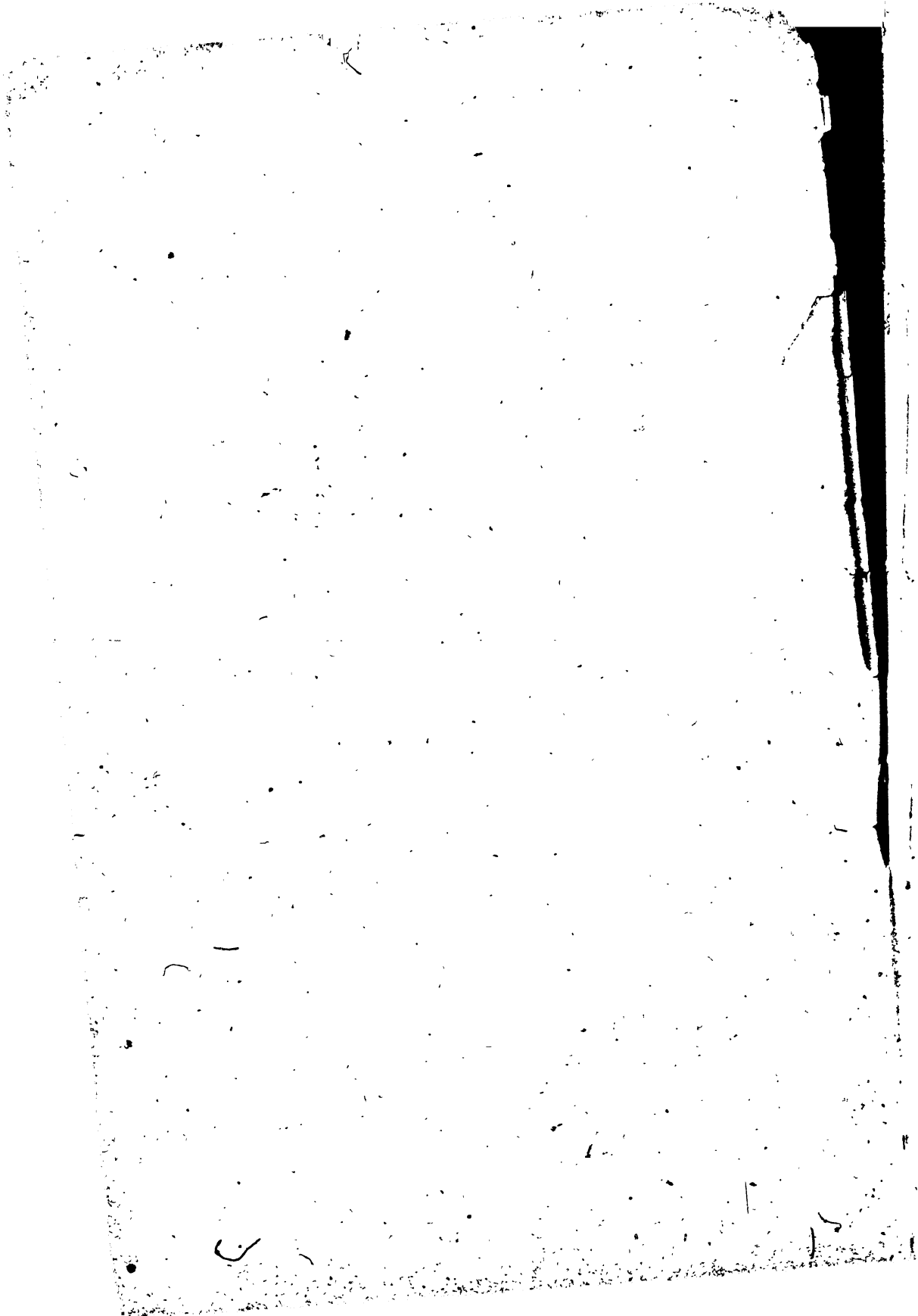
WILLIAM KIRBY,

Author of "The Chien, D'Or."

TORONTO:
WILLIAM BRIGGS, PUBLISHER.

1880.

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“ For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime ;
Young Lycidas, who hath not left his peer ;
Who would not sing for Lycidas ? ” — *Milton.*

PART FIRST.

A SHAMEFUL and ungenerous war at best,
Waged ruthlessly despite the wise and good,
Too few to hinder it, had been declared
Against our King and country, in the name
Of that false Liberty, whose Phrygian cap
Set up on naked poles, proclaimed a birth,
Servile and alien to our kindred blood ;
To all the great traditions of our race
In Freedom nurtured, as her true born sons.
Spring came, and wolfish winter fled amain.
Not unregretted ; for thick rumours ran
Of armies gathering to invade us, when
The snow-drifts melted and the ice gave way
That long had barred our coasts. The savage war
Had been suspended by a truce, while lay
Our foes in frozen camps, sore stricken down
’Neath Brock’s victorious sword that won Detroit,
And, flashing out again on Queenston Heights,
Passed them beneath the yoke, a captive host,
Making the red earth redder, where he fell,
And gave his own pure life that we might live.

Our Country’s tears had fallen copiously
From hearts surcharged with sorrow, o’er his grave
Ungrassed as yet, ’mid guns and piled up balls,
Within a rugged bastion of Fort George.
There lay our soldier statesman, whose brave words
Had rung in trumpet tones throughout the land,

Bidding us rise for country and for King !
 No vain appeal ! For, like a forest fire
 That makes its fuel as it rages on,
 It seized all hearts—made each Canadian ten,
 In strength and valour to resist the foe,
 And guard from spoil their homes and native land.

The sun ascending the clear heights of May
 Flooded the sky with silvery splendour, while
 The earth stirred warm beneath the vital heat,
 And woke to life the flowers, to joy the birds—
 The birds that come in flocks like happy thoughts
 To happy hearts—singing from tree to tree,
 Mate answering mate, or fluttering two and two
 In shady bowers secluded build their nests.

The tinkling cow-bells far within the woods,
 With hum of insects many, caught the ear,
 Beneath the young-leaved trees, all pale as yet
 With pure and virgin freshness. The lush grass
 In every glade and meadow, ankle deep,
 Sprang up spontaneously—the gift of God
 To His clean creatures made for use of man,
 Besides great things and small, in varied forms
 All for our sake created and called good.

Where Lake Ontario lays his stately head
 In the broad lap of hills, that stretch away
 To the long slopes of Flamboro', forest clad
 With oak and beech, and many a spiry pine
 Fast rooted on the crags, in high survey,
 There stood a country mansion, broad and low ;
 Its walls, hewn from the forest, were well seen,
 In neatness, purity and taste, to be
 The home refined of some true gentleman.
 Amid the broad surroundings of a farm,
 Cleared from the wilderness in bygone years,
 Were marks of culture and of woman's hand
 Outside and in, that pleased the passer by.
 Its trellised roses, clumps and shaven lawn,
 With bowls to play the good old-fashioned game
 Played by our ancestors, denoted ease,
 Good humour, and good neighbourhood. And more :
 A fair girl's face, so lovely and refined,
 Canadian of an English stock—you knew
 It was no other—from the lattice looked
 Down the long sloping meadows, where a brook
 Brawled loudly 'mid the stones that checked its course ;
 A cold, clear stream, where oft at early dawn
 The lightfoot does would stop and slake their thirst,

Then lead their fawns back to the grassy nooks
Of glades well hidden from the hunter's eye.

A girl's face, still a woman's; her dark eyes,
Made for all joys, were moist with tears. Some grief
That comes to loving hearts, had come to hers.
But newly come, in sooth. Her maiden cheek—
Wild roses not more delicate of hue—
Had paled a shade or two. Her sunny smile,
The brightest ever flashed from woman's face,
Was for the first time ousted of its right
To dance amid the dimples. While a sigh,
In place of laughter, unreproved escaped
Her sweet, half-opened and expectant lips.
Her hands, more shapely than the sculptor's art
E'er carved on Parian marble, were close clasped,
And only Sundered, as from time to time
She swept her dark hair back, to catch again
A sound like distant thunder in the air,
While her lips moved as if in silent prayer.

Her eyes were fixed upon the placid lake
That lay in its immensity of blue,
Enlarging ever broader from the hills
And tree-clad promontories. On the top
Of one, a beacon smoked—a mighty cloud,
Thick, black and startling, rose to heaven's height—
The signal of invasion! while the boom
Of distant cannon shook the silent air;
A heavy, deadly sound, that gathered up
A train of solemn echoes—passing o'er
The woods and waters of Ontario.

"O, mother! mother! listen!" cried the girl,
With anguish in her face, and upraised hands,
While fell her hair down in a sable flood:—
"Another day of battle! O, Great God!
Who gives us fathers, brothers, for our love,
Who cannot die for them, as they for us!"

Her mother sat immovable; a pain,
As of old wounds re-opened, rent her breast,
For she had seen the storms of war before,
Sweep down the Mohawk vales, where she was born,
Amid the castles loyal to the King.
"God give them victory!" the mother said,
"And spare those lives far dearer than our own!
It sounds like battle, but may only be
Rejoicing in the camp."

"Nay, but it is!
There's iron in the air!" the girl replied,

And clasped her mother round the neck. " I know
The sound of battle from rejoicing ; since
We heard them both on Queenston's bloody day.
O, for a messenger to bring us news
That all is well ! "

Some men who passed in haste
To their alarm posts, told her : " They had heard
Old Newark was assailed. The hostile fleet
That erewhile ravaged York, but failed to hold
The capital, had sailed again, to land
An army of ten thousand on our shores !
Our men were few and overmatched ; but yet
The cannon booming faster, faster, told
A tale of desperate resistance. Not
Till all lay dead on the Canadian shore,
Should Dearborn land his host," the men averred,
And forthwith hastened to their rallying place.

The boom of distant cannon—peal on peal,
Kept on with ever-shorter interval,
The tremor shook the house, still more the hearts
Of its lone inmates—that fair girl we saw,
And her fond mother—as they knelt in prayer,
And wept and pleaded for God's help to aid
Those near and dear to them, who had gone down
To fight their country's battles with their foes.
For father, brothers, one ; for husband, sons,
The other prayed. Five from that happy home
Had joined the camp at Newark, days ago ;
The yeomen of the land, well trained and ranked
With royal troops, a choice but very few,
Assembled there to meet the multitude,
Who rumour said were coasting up the Lake,
Ten thousand strong, to take the loyal town.
No man had flinched. It was not in their blood
To yield to any—least of all to those
Once ranked as rebels to the Crown ; and still
Friends of its foes, and foes of all its friends.

And there was none to tell how went the fight ;
No news that all were safe for whom they prayed
If all were spared they loved ; and Isa clasped
Her hands in anguish, for full well she knew,
Where hottest raged the battle on the shore,
Would one be found who loved her, in despite
Of maiden coyness and reserve, that feared
Herself far more than him. Her love was gone
Forever to young Basil of " The King's,"*

* The 8th, or King's Regiment, famous in American warfare.

Who won her, ere she knew how weak her heart
 In secret was for Basil; though, in sooth,
 For reasons good, she trembled to avow
 The love that should not be; that takes the eye
 Of woman, ere she asks the reason why.

The beacons flamed and smoked with gathering wrath,
 Far down the coast, on point and headland grim,
 And still the distant cannon jarred the air
 With dull reverberations—sounds of woe
 To loving ears that listened—raised fresh prayers
 Of anxious women, after each discharge,
 For those whose lives were dearer than their own,
 For their dear country, dearer still than all,
 And victory upon their nation's foes—
 For loyal to their very garments' hem
 Were our Canadian women in those days;
 As they are now—and will be evermore.

The sun shone out, nor hasted to go down,
 However eager eyes longed for the hour,
 To end the battle with the shades of night,
 As once on Gibeon, where he stood all day
 'Gainst prayers of stricken men, and would not set,
 To save the Amoritish host, that fled
 Before the sword of Joshua, and still
 More terrible, the stones of heaven that fell—
 (God's truth that smites rank falsehood on the brain)
 To save the humblest servants of the Lord,
 Who only do His work, and ask not why,
 Bring wood and water to His altar; they
 Are His peculiar care, His Gibeonites,
 Although not children of His covenant;
 For them His greatest wonderwork was done!

The broad grey sky stretched endlessly away,
 Without a cloud to dapple it, save one
 Long purple bed that lay low in the west,
 Befringed with gold, lifted from under heaven
 To make the glorious couch of setting day.
 The apple trees, asnow with blossom, stood,
 A revelation of the inner world,
 Whence comes their beauty, to the eyes of man,
 Too often slow to catch the half it means.
 The green grass in the meadows glowed more green
 As fell the sunset rays athwart the land;
 The crocus, daffodil, and cowslip pale,
 The violet, that shyest babe of Spring,
 Peeping and spying from its tufts of leaves,
 Together mixed their perfume with the breath

Of evening, when the bushes were astir
 With new-come summer birds that flashed their wings,
 And sang so joyfully it wrought a pain
 To hearts untuned to hear their gladsome lays.

For very desolate to-day appeared
 The land, and deaf to music were the ears
 Intent to catch the tidings no man brought,
 "How went the battle?" and the women stood
 Pale-lipped, with eyes that just held back the tears,
 Like Sisera's mother at the lattice, far
 Gazing along the hills, crying "in pain,
 "Why come no tidings? Have our men not sped?
 Our loyal men who went down to the fight
 With hearts brave as their love was tender? Oh!
 God give them victory, whose cause is just!
 Defending hearth and home 'gainst ruthless foes—
 For King and country dying, if they must!
 While their true women hope, and fear, and trust,
 And deck their chambers with the freshest flowers,
 And spread the couches soft for their repose,
 Sharing their weal and woe unto the end."

The cannon ceased. They knew the fight was done,
 And now the silence seemed more terrible
 Than sounds of battle. Evening came, and night,
 And still they watched; those faithful women all,
 Till morn returned, when every flower and tree
 Watered the earth with dripping dew, like tears,
 As over some great sorrow that befell.

Then horsemen spurring came, all blood and mire,
 With news: "The foe had landed! Newark town
 Was in their hands! Its shores strewn with the dead
 Of hundreds of our country's bravest men
 Who fell in its defence, and hundreds more
 Of foes, on land and water. Everywhere
 Was reaped Death's bloody harvest, and the town
 Was filled with dead and dying. Sullenly,
 Retreating mile by mile to Burlington,
 Our troops fall back, to rest and spring afresh
 Upon the host that follows them—perchance
 To its destruction; and so may it be!"

"And so it will be!" said the men; but who
 Were safe and who had fallen, they but knew
 In part, yet glad to answer cheerfully
 The agonizing questions from the heart
 That plucked reply, and would not be denied,
 Till every name, but one, was mentioned o'er.
 "The men of Flamboro' were safe," they said,

When last they saw them rearward in retreat,
 Fronting the enemy with blow for blow.
 But one name was unmentioned. All the while
 It trembled on the lips of that fair girl,
 Like moonlight on a ripple. Could you read
 Love's language in its own true syllables,
 As angels speak it, or as men once spake
 The speech of Eden with one tongue, ere they
 Fell into discord upon Shinar's plain,
 You might have read that name on Isa's lip—
 The name beloved of Basil of "The King's."

 PART SECOND.

Next day the army came in slow retreat,
 With stubborn ranks, like the ten thousand Greeks,
 Though scarce ten hundred, numbered man by man.
 They pitched their camp, and turned and stood at bay,
 Across the Isthmus sheer on either side,
 Amid the marshes (more than mountain tops
 The refuges of freedom in all time),
 And there bade stern defiance to the foe,
 Who followed with wild fanfare of parade
 And banners, drums, and proclamations thick
 As snowflakes when the flocks are driving down
 The mountain side—a noisy rout—nor know
 What doom awaits them in the lowland plains.

The father now, and brothers, for a day
 Had leave to quit the camp to visit home,
 To fold and be enfolded in the arms
 Beloved and loving of the dear ones there,
 Who met them at the gate far down the lawn,
 With tears of joy and kisses. One short hour
 Of such a meeting to those loyal hearts,
 Repaid them for all toils and dangers run.

And one more came and joined the eager group
 Upon the broad verandah, where the theme
 Was of the war, its losses, glories, gains,
 And all the incidents of land and lake,
 With sighs of tender pity for the maimed
 And dead of their defenders, whom they knew;
 With many a heart-throb of a hope assured
 Of victory ere long, upon their foes,
 Now drawing nigh to meet their sudden doom.

The one who came was Basil of "The King's,"
 And Isa blushed, and drooped an instant down
 Her dark, soft eye-lashes, in hope to hide

The light within. She felt a flash like pain,
 Of some great joy. Nor could her hand keep down
 The sudden heart-beat as she welcomed him
 With hard enforced composure. He had been
 A very Paladin in deeds of arms
 Throughout the bloody fray at Newark. None
 Had been more brave and helpful in the field,
 Playing the deadly game like chess, as cool
 And wary to withhold, as prompt to strike.
 A soldier with the seed in him, that grows
 With time into a hero of the age.

A handsome youth, indeed ; strong, straight of limb,
 Tall, tawny-haired, with face that got its bloom
 Where salt sea-breezes overblow the shores
 Of that fair land of old,—Deira called,
 Whose children in the Roman Forum stood
 When Gregory passed. "*Hi Angeli!*" said he,
 "*Non Angli sunt!*" and looked amazed. "They are
 Too beautiful for heathen, lost to God!
 Angels, not Angles! Were the Gospel sent
 Among them, they were chiefest of the earth!
 The world's great rulers in the times to come!"
 Of that fair race was Basil of "The King's."

A man to love, and Isa loved him well ;
 Nor guessed her love's immeasurable height.
 A man to fear ; for if he went astray
 With his great intellect the gloomy road
 Of doubt, denial, lack of faith in God,
 A soul perverted, which, if guided right,
 Had been a morning star to men that wake
 In the third watch at dawning of the day,
 To show the world a new and better way ;
 Like him who fell like lightning from the stars
 Of knowledge into darkness, so at last
 Would fall young Basil, like a temple struck
 In all its parts, pillar, and arch, and roof,
 Tumbled in heaps on its foundation stones.

Nature had moulded him a form for use
 Of all things good and true, and yet at heart
 He was a heathen. Only things he saw
 And felt, and weighed, and measured by the rules
 Of science, and what seemed philosophy,
 Believed he. Perfect in the sense of things
 Material ; but in things above the sense,
 That man has common with the birds and beasts—
 The suprasensual, spiritual, divine,
 Discreted in the soul of man, and fenced

As was Mount Sinai, when God spake the law,—
 In these believed he not. To all the grand
 Preludes of immortality that fill
 The universe and heart of humbler men,
 Basil was blind and deaf—insensible,
 Though touch divine did touch him in the eye
 And ear, without response; for he had framed
 A labyrinth of vain imaginings,
 Axioms of cold negations, winding stairs
 That led to nothing and from nothing sprung—
 As true to seeming as geometry;
 As empty too of substance, being but
 A shape without a body—nothing more!
 Or body of mere dust without the breath
 God breathes in it to make a living soul.

A quaint old manor-house upon the wolds
 That overlooked the Northern Sea, his home,
 And home of a long line of ancestors,
 Inherited by him, an orphan left,
 Without a mother's lips to teach him prayer,
 Or father's lessons, mightier to mould
 The plastic mind than all in after-years
 Can do or undo. For the primal truths
 Of home and its affections in the heart,
 Set like the stones of Jordan in the ford,
 Remain for ever; although covered oft
 In after life with floods, they still emerge
 At the subsidence, firm, and broad, and safe,
 For life's departing footsteps, as they cross
 The darksome river to the shores beyond,
 Where stand the beckoning angels, crying "Come!"
 At thousand paths, to lead us up to dwell
 With those that we love best, for evermore.

With heedless guardians, who gave little care
 What wrong or rank opinions he imbibed,
 Young Basil, with a soul susceptible
 As crystal to the lights and hues of truth,
 Absorbing darkness too, when light was gone,
 Plunged in a sea of books. A fearless lad,
 Breasting the breakers like a dolphin, glad
 To sport on sunny waves, or diving down
 In reckless venture of youth's hardihood,
 Into the depths and darknesses profound,
 Where dwell the old leviathans of doubt:
 Lucretius, Hobbes, Voltaire, and Bolingbroke,
 With others still more earthy of our times,
 Who rake amid the dust of mundane things,

To prove the bestial descent of man.
 Their boldness caught the boy at vantage, then,
 Even as a whirlwind to its vortex draws.
 Loose and unstable things, in sunless gloom
 Of cold materialism, taught him fast
 Knowledge of good and evil, plucked the fruit
 And gave him, and he ate; and deemed it good
 To teach himself, and not be taught of God;
 As once in Eden man ate, and was wise
 In shame of self; but all unwise to Him
 Who walks amidst Life's garden in the cool
 Of twilight, calling: "Adam! where art thou?"
 Oh! happy he who hides not from that voice
 In his transgression! but will hear the Word
 Of Life in life—without which all is vain,
 Philosophies are nought, and science dead.

But strong was Basil's nature; underneath
 The gorget of a loyal soldier, beat
 His heart with all the instincts of his race:
 Courage and honour, love of truth, and more
 Than common love for his dear country. He
 Was proud of her renown in arts and arms,
 Empire and Freedom, crowned from ancient days
 With regal splendour "by the grace of God."

No empty formula! he granted that,
 And liked the phrase, expressive of a thing
 Needed for human governance. If law
 Were without sanction greater than the man's
 Who made it, greater than or King or State,
 And without power that in itself is right,
 As warrant for authority—why, then,
 Justice were nought; obedience, policy;
 And moral good but selfishness refined,
 Earthy in all its elements, and vile.

Young Basil's bark struck on this dangerous rock,
 That lay mid-stream in all his reasonings,
 Threatening destruction to them, as they sank
 Loaded with logic of false premises
 And Godless arguments. In vain he strove
 To catch them sinking, by the floating locks,
 To rescue them, but could not. One by one
 They ever would escape his strongest grasp,
 And leave him struggling in the turbid flood
 Unanswered, angry at himself and them,
 Blinded with sun-glare.

Art alone for him
 With its ideal, like a living soul

In things material, the flash and warmth
Of spheres supernal, sometimes raised the veil
Just for a glimpse, and let it fall again
Before he caught the vision's perfect form.

For earth and heaven compose God's oldest book
By His own fingers writ in hieroglyphs,
Significant of meanings all divine,
Which none interpret but the truly wise
Who learn in God's way, not in man's, to read.

Whence comes the bright ideal, flashing through
A skyrift in the heavens, when we feel
That nature's pulses synchronize with ours?
Whence? But that nature is our outward self,
And all her parts but portions of the whole
Grand harmony complete in perfect man!
The soul as in a mirror sees itself
Reflected in the universe of things,
As God in all that's good and true. We catch
A glimpse as of a distant summer sea,
Glowing like glass beyond the thunderous clouds
Of this life's tempests, till with eager oar
We launch our boat and seek the evermore!

Sometimes in better moods, young Basil felt
The stirrings of a Spirit, not his own,
That wrestled with him till the sinew shrank
Of his strong self-hood; as in Peniel once,
A stronger man than he was overthrown
Contending with the Angel all night long,
And by God's truth was vanquished.

Basil thus
Felt oft his powers of reason halt and lame,
In the vast presence of life infinite,
And overwhelming forces above man's.
He cried for light—more light!—as Ajax prayed
For light, to fight life's battle in the day,
And not to die in darkness! Who can live
Upon loose sand-hills of negations, blown
By arid winds for ever to and fro?
Not Basil! too clear-eyed and full of heart
To live *in vacuo*; "For something is,
And must be!" said he; "What, I know not! but—
Those wretched butts! that tangle up the skein
Of our existence on the reel of life
The wrong way winding!—Isa! canst thou help?
Women alone, methinks, these riddles solve!"

The roses flushed upon her damask cheek:
"Yes, Basil!" said she, "if we pray in love

For truth to live by it,—'tis not withheld !
 It comes in ways unseen by us, but sure,
 As day will follow with the risen sun.
 There is a cliff that ends the world—the which
 We talk of in our childhood and believe,
 And find it when we die. Upon its top
 Philosophy and Science, be they wise,
 Will wait in faith the rising of the sun—
 God's light that comes enlightening the soul.

“ When men with crucible and glasses rare,
 Have analyzed creation to its dust,
 In search of primal life, and find it not ;
 Upon that cliff they too will take their stand,
 And gaze disconsolate at the abyss
 Of roaring seas, the vast beyond, to them
 Unknowable ; nor boat nor Charon find
 To cross the ocean of the infinite
 Divide, that separates them from the true,
 The spiritual, the immortal life.”

Her face angelic glowed as she went on
 With heart-beats quicker—“ Yet, O Basil ! know
 Amid that flood is easy pathway found !
 When the wise virgins come with lamps alit,
 To lead night's pilgrims through the wastes of doubt,
 To life beyond the boundaries of the dark !
 The triune mystery of the universe
 Gives up its secret and its sign to those,
 And only those, who know the name divine,
 And speak it as their password at the gate,
 Where all who ask receive, who seek shall find,
 Truth, knowledge, peace, and rest for souls perplexed.
 The Lord of light and love denies us never !”

Her words struck Basil forcefully. He turned
 With wilful indirectness of reply ;
 While beamed his face a glad and sunny smile—
 “ Yes, Isa, darling ! On an eve like this,
 Of balmy May, with all the west aglow
 In gold and crimson glory, with one spot
 Triply resplendent where the sun descends,
 Broadening upon the horizon, full of peace,
 With all things beautiful and beautified,
 One well may grant your postulate ; and when
 I look into those wondrous eyes of thine,
 Beaming with light seraphic, as the moon
 Floods half the heaven until it dims the stars
 In thy dear presence, I can truly feel
 The immortality of love.”

“Methinks,

Most things die duly in their time. When ripe,
 Their uses end stored up in seeds and husks,
 For new beginnings of th' eternal round
 Of earth's existences. A grain of sand
 In little is an image of the world ;
 It has its axis and equator, all
 The primal forces in it are the same
 As rule the universe. A higher law
 Lifts man above the level of the rest
 With heart and intellect ; nor is he doomed,
 I fain would hope, to vanish at the last,
 Like morning mist that melts into the blue.”

Beneath the stately pines, shot through and through
 With slanting rays, they sat, and Isa's eyes
 Beamed with soft lights ; but all of love and joy.
 Some dawning thoughts, half-risen, flashed along
 Her heart's horizon, and she felt and knew,
 As every woman knows, love's lightest touch,
 By her divinest instinct to be true.

“ I cannot reason, Basil ! if I would ”—
 Her voice was low and laden with her love—

“ Can only think, as woman thinks of one
 Who sways her being, as they say the moon
 Draws all the tides of ocean in her wake.
 I cannot give thee reasons, I have none,
 Save that my heart knows it unerringly.
 The weak, untutored infant in the arms
 Of its fond mother, from her speaking eyes
 Learns things ineffable ; but no less sure,
 More sure, than after-reason ever knows,
 With painful questioning and high debate,
 When men build up a Babel to the skies.”

“ My Basil ! ” said she, pausing as she spake,
 And wondering if he deemed her overbold ;
 With gentle hand she wished to touch, not pierce,
 Those stubborn thoughts of his and soften them.
 She thought upon a scene one summer day,
 When she, with troops of maidens bearing flowers,
 And wreathing them in garlands as they passed,
 Greeted the gallant soldiers of “ The King's.”
 Love that day smiled upon her, as she gave
 The roses she had gathered, dreaming not
 Of what would happen her ; caught by his looks
 And gentle thanks, she blushed, confused to feel
 Her cheek was all aglow, and blushed the more,
 Of some vexation conscious in herself,

Hoping her weakness had escaped his eye,
 Yet knew it had not, and she fain had quenched
 In ocean depth, the sudden fire that burned
 Her cheek as she abruptly turned aside.

"My Basil!" said she, "in what wondrous way,
 Not Chance nor Fate—these are blind things, indeed;
 But God's own providence it was that led
 The vergent currents of our lives to join!
 Young Basil smiled as one at rest and ease,
 Nought lacking to him; for as yet his doubts
 Were robust, healthy, ignorantly wise,
 Because sincere, but faith in God, a stone
 Laid on his back and borne uphill with pain.
 Yet full of youth, a hardy mountaineer,
 He stretched his limbs and tossed his tawny locks
 On crags of doubt; abysses under him
 Were unregarded as he dashed amid
 The thickening mists, nought fearing, life or death.
 But one more fair than Hero held the torch
 Above Abydos now. The Asian shore,
 God's continent, seemed nearer than before!

"Yea, granted all, my Isa! if nor Chance
 Nor Fate, blind forces, witless what they do,
 Brought me this happiness, this sense of rest
 In full assurance of thy love; why then,
 An overruling God it was who led
 The vergent currents of our lives to join.
 And when I look into those eyes of thine,
 Veiling their glance of tenderness and joy,
 I make acknowledgment, and mutely own
 That when that mocking master said: "*Si Dieu,
 N'existait pas il faudrait l'inventer,*"
 He spake more truth, and better than he knew."

"Thank God for that, my Basil!" she replied;
 "He spake more truth, and better than he knew,
 And yet a good man said it not. His speech
 Contained no reverence. Not so taught He
 Who teaches us, as children, to believe
 In God above all worlds, and things therein.
 That primal truth, Science must postulate,
 Or wander blind throughout the universe
 With groping staff—a beggar asking alms
 Of all creation sooner than of God!
 If such the law, that law we must accept.
 God's words and works fitly conjoin in one
 True harmony. When rightly understood,
 We may discern the inner side of things,

Reflected here in grand correspondencies
 Of truth, and love, and beauties manifold.
 Nor less, alas ! in vile deformity
 Where evil mixes. Thus in part we see
 By what is made, the things unseen—the end
 And meaning of ourselves and of the world.
 As in the mount of God the prophet saw
 The types of all things sacred, that should be,
 So Art sees its ideals, yet unborn—
 The groups that on the uncoloured canvas glow,
 The shapes that hide within the unchiselled stone;
 And Science grasps the fitting key, unlocks
 The secret of the universe to man.
 Thus reach we Wisdom ; not with painful search,
 Treading a flinty path with naked feet,
 But pleasantly, as loitering on the grass
 Of verdant meads !

“ The concord that we feel
 Of nature with ourselves in higher moods—
 Men call it art, or poetry, or taste,
 Or sympathy with what is beautiful—
 Springs from the one humanity, pervades
 All things, as the true outcomes of ourselves.
 Thus all Creation images the man ;
 As man his Maker.

“ But, my Basil ! oft
 Our thoughts are in eclipse of our own selves,
 As in the West at evening to our gaze,
 What comes between us and the sun seems dark,
 With its long shadows stretching to our feet.”

He gravely smiled as not incredulous,
 And touched her cheek with gentle finger-tip,
 As one sure of her answer, nor afraid.

“ What just conclusions draws my Isa hence?
 I think I know.”

“ And I know not,” she said.

“ I draw conclusions none. Such thoughts to me
 Come without speech, they come spontaneously,
 Flow past me like a brook, and I but dip
 My hand to catch some drops up to my lip
 In full assurance of clear light above
 Life's doubts and darknesses just as one knows,
 In winter's gloomiest day above the clouds
 The glorious sun is shining in his strength.
 My Basil ! listen ! Sitting here at ease
 Upon this height, amid the waving grass,
 With pencil in my hand but idly used,

And looking not *against*, but *with* the sun,
 The landscape's full embodiment I see.
 A sunbeam must be followed where it falls;
 And then all things appear to order due,
 Distinct in figure, true in line and hue.
 'Tis wise philosophy to think with God,
 Most wise to orient our lives with Christ."

He grasped both hands in his, as one who loves
 A woman doubly, and with reverence kissed,
 And she withdrew them not; but gently said,
 Her dark eye softening, as in search of pain
 She found not:—

"Basil, Christ hath touched thy heart,
 Not I! Not I! His humblest instrument,
 Without a reason other than my love
 To offer thee. 'Tis womanly, they say,
 Our gift, to know without a reason, what
 To man comes reasonably; merit none
 Have we in this. Nay, haply more have you
 Who seek by tortuous quest to solve the doubts
 Made clear to us, who only sit and wait,
 Like children holding fast the garment's edge
 Of Christ, believing Him, and ask no more."

PART THIRD.

The sun was sinking on the verdant hills
 Of Ancaster, thick wooded to their tops.
 The English camp lay visible afar,
 Like snow-drifts whitening the woods of Spring,
 And as the breeze of evening rose and fell,
 The banners fluttered; while the bugles rang
 At intervals the calls preceding night.
 For stout old Vincent, of war's counsels sure,
 Wily as Nestor, and as grey, resolved
 To stop retreat, turn back, and strike the foe,
 Drunk with success, a quick and deadly blow.

The broad, hill-girded bay afloat with light,
 Barred with red shafts of sunset shooting through,
 Lay rippling like a valley, diamond-strewn,
 Of Wonderland, more beautiful and true.
 The burnished headlands of Ontario,
 Sun-tipped, in long succession couched at rest
 Each on his shadow, grim with silent wrath
 Of smouldering beacons, while the sandy shore,
 Fringed with white breakers, as a picture, seemed
 Of silent clamour and of powerless rage,

Seen in the distances but all unheard.
 A fleet of war-ships the horizon filled,
 Steering a western course in close array,
 To flank their army's march along the shore,
 Where it pressed inland, with loud beat of drums,
 And waft of banners—as of conquest sure.
 Some fearless fisher boats that watched the fleet,
 Their sunlit sails all leaning to the west,
 Flew on before like sea-gulls in a gale,
 And at the close of day brought tidings in :—
 “ The ships had anchored and the army camped,
 And with the watch-fires kindling for the night
 The woods of Stony Creek seemed all ablaze.”

Young Basil scanned the ships with soldier's eye
 That flashed expectant of the coming fight
 He knew was imminent. A gaiety,
 More than of love's contentment, Isa saw
 Was bubbling up fresh sparkles in the wine
 Of his discourse, which she had drank all day,
 Intoxicate at heart, yet sober still
 In all a maiden's sweet reserve, who hides,
 Even from her lover, half the joy she feels.

“ This night will make a record for the morn ! ”
 Said Basil, quietly ; as one who breaks
 Some tidings that may startle those who hear.
 She looked at him intently—pride and fear
 Upon her cheek, alternate flushed and paled—
 For well she comprehended all he said ;
 And all he left unsaid was audible
 Enough to love's high wrought and subtle ear,
 That sixth sense of a woman in the heart,
 That knows instinctively the truth beyond
 Man's utmost reasoning.

Isa half rose :

“ Thou meanest, dearest Basil ! that to-night
 Our troops will march to meet the enemy.”
 She faltered.

But he gaily took the word—

“ And I go with them, Isa ! 'tis most sure !
 Yon fleet has come to anchor, and their camp
 Will riot in security to-night,
 And threaten us with Caudine Forks at morn !
 But I mistake our grey old chief, if he
 Before the dawn returns, or cease the stars
 To twinkle in the lofty roof of night,
 Bring not the doom of judgment on the foe,

And out of their dead hands a victory wrench,
Will give to Stony Creek historic fame."

A cold, quick shiver through the maiden ran,
As when they say, "One walks upon our graves,"
It shook her for a moment's space, the while,
The foolish superstition crossed her mind.

"My Basil!" said she, holding fast the hand
That clasped her to his heart, and closer pressed,
"Would that I were a man! one of 'The King's,'
This night to march beside thee! It is worse
Methinks for women to be left behind,
To weep, and pray, and wait for tidings sad,
While all the world without is glorified
With victory—forgetful of the cost"

"My Amazon that would be!" he replied,
With sunbeams on his lips. "Most worthy thou
Of those brave German women, who of old
Went with their men to battle, bearing gifts
Of love to recompense, or words of blame,
More dire than death, for all faint-heartedness!
But I am most content and glad, to know
My priceless jewels are all safe at home!
But Isa! thou, perforce, wilt welcome me
On my return to-morrow, famishing
As any hungry soldier of The King's,
Rewarding me as I may have deserved
After the busy night work that shall be."

She tried to smile, but failed; as when the sun
Whitens a mist opaque, without a ray
That pierces through the blank and ghostly gloom,
Her eyes filled fast, no glance of gaiety
Responded to his cheerfulness. The fear
Of some misfortune crept into her heart,
And droned incessantly a dirge of woe.

Then rose they up to meet a messenger,
A bold, blunt soldier, by the Colonel sent,
To summon Basil to the camp at ten.
The man knew more than by his message came—

"If Captain Basil leads the forlorn hope,"

Said he, respectfully, with hand to brow,

"May I be one of them? the first of all
The hundreds who will volunteer with you?"

"You know more than a soldier should, I think,
At least to speak of it!" and Basil smiled
Good-naturedly. He liked the frank address
Of manly men like this, who thus replied:—

“ O, Sir ! one does not need a pair of eyes
To see the hour of battle close at hand !
We soldiers, lying down upon the grass,
Smoke and converse among ourselves, and judge
Of this and that—just as our betters do—
They say in camp, to-day will end retreat ;
And knowing our old General is of stuff
That will not warp or shrink—they hold it sure
That Stony Creek will be attacked to-night.”
The man stood up at strict attention while
Young Basil answered him—“ Go now and tell
The Colonel that I shall report at ten
To take his orders, and if I want men
I'll not forget you, friend ! So now begone ! ”
The orderly remounted, and like fire
His red coat flashed between the lofty pines
A minute, and then vanished down the path
That seemed to run into the throat of night,
Where dragon Darkness swallowed up the day.
The evening star shone bright upon the hill,
Love's beacon guiding, when they turned to go.
Twilight drew round their feet, its fairy web
By night-elves woven in the darkening grass,
As down the hill they loitered slowly home.
The house stood sharply outlined in the faint
Pale, silver gray of evening, and each tree
Was pencilled on the clear but fading sky,
In inky tracery to its finest bough.
The curtains were undrawn, the lamps unlit,
But on the windows played a lambent glow
Of cheerful firelight, from the open hearth,
Where blazed the maple logs, and crickets sang
The music of an old and happy home—
While, now and then, a face against the pane
Was pressed, as if to look for their return.
The sound of tinkling bells rose on the air,
With bleat of sheep, barking, and voice of men,
Shutting the folds up safely for the night,
To guard the flock from ravage of the wolves,
Which, near at hand, howled in the hungry woods,
Or bears that prowled up from the dismal marsh,
Thick set with jungle of wild tamarac,
In search of prey upon the Flamboro' hills.
Not speaking much, too full of what she feared
Might happen ere to-morrow—Isa said,
While clinging to the arm she knew must soon

Leave her fond clasp, to mingle in the strife
 And clash of steel and dreadful shouts of death :—
 “ O ! Basil mine ! I cannot tell the thoughts
 That weigh me down to silence If so be
 The man spake truly, I can only pray
 For thy return, unharmed, with victory
 Upon thy sword, and boundless joy for me.
 I would not, if I could, dissuade thee ! Nay,
 Would rather share thy dangers, if I might
 Do aught to save our country from its foes,
 To live for it or die, as God dispose.”

“ There spake a Queen of Amazons, indeed !”
 Replied he gaily, with a cheerful smile,
 To raise her spirits to the height of his,—
 “ But life, my Isa ! is not easy lost,
 With love’s immortal ichor in our veins !
 Did not Æneas, stricken by the blow
 Of fell Tydides, live by grace of love ?
 So I, with more than he to live for, far,
 My king to serve, my country to defend,
 And thee to wed and worship—shall not die !
 My world of life and love is just begun !”

Great tears stood in her eyes. He saw and said :
 “ Forgive me ! Isa ! what a fault is mine !
 With this untimely mirth that keeps not step
 With thy angelic gravity, that fain
 Would smile with me but cannot, for my sake.
 Alas ! if God’s or woman’s love should cease
 Because of faults in man ! Then lost, indeed,
 Were he, without a hope to gild his lot !”

The phrase struck on her ear ; as when the pipe
 Of Spring’s sweet harbinger, the bluebird, sounds
 With sudden music in the gloomy woods,
 Still leafless and embanked with winter snow,
 That lingers in the swales and sunless shade.
 “ O, Basil !” said she, gently, “ Woman’s love
 Is not her own to give or take away !
 There comes a time of times, brings to the heart
 Its vernal equinox—when, happy they
 Who know the season of the seed divine
 To plant it in all worthiness—to grow
 And blossom into everlasting life !”

He raised her hand with reverence to his lips.
 “ It comes to me,” he said, “ that vernal time
 Of light and love ! The blessed angel thou,
 Of its annunciation ! Isa, thou art sent—
 God-sent, it may be, with this message now !”

Thus, slowly, home they reached, and at the door
 The household gathered, and a soldier stood,
 Young Basil's orderly, who held his horse,
 That champed his foaming bit, and tossed his mane,
 Pawing the ground impatient to be gone.
 The watch-fires of the English camp were lit
 Down the hill sides, and on the level beach,
 With crafty purpose, to deceive the foe,
 When Basil, with a kiss and brief good-bye
 Left Isa, smiling in her tears, with grasp
 Of friendly hands of others—rode away
 In joyous spirits to rejoin "The King's,"
 And share with them the glory of the night.
 One secret Isa kept, of all she knew,
 From Basil—one of all her thoughts that day—
 A resolution of her woman's heart,
 Moved to its depths, to aid the gallant men,
 Wounded and dying in the fight to come.
 With Basil foremost in the danger, she
 Must succour them, and would.

"For what," she cried,

"If he should fall, with none to care for him?"
 And some must die, she knew—the price of blood
 Must needs be given for the victory—
 For, strong in all the courage of her race
 She faltered not in faith that they would win.
 So she, with high resolve, would seek the field,
 To help and comfort, as a woman might,
 With gentle hand, and not unskilled to heal.
 For war had rudely taught her not to faint
 At sight of wounds and sickness in the camp;
 Nor flinch from woman's part, beloved of Christ,
 In deeds of mercy shown to friend and foe.

When Basil reached the camp, "Good-night! all's well!"
 The sentries cried; while cheery bugles rang
 Their last sweet call to set the watch, and rest
 The war-worn soldiers for another night—
 A ruse to cheat the enemy, he knew!
 He smiled, and rode straight to the tent, where sat
 The gray, old General, with a chosen few
 Bold leaders, ready, at the order given,
 To march with all their men to Stony Creek,
 Amid the darkness, and with one stout blow
 Strike down the enemy, and free the land.

The General greeted Basil with a smile,
 Not without seriousness; as one who weighed

The chance of life and death in his commands,
 As he assigned the duties of the night
 To each and all, with carefulness, and gave
 The post of honour, as of danger, due
 To Basil—who'm the General fitly called,
 "The bravest Paladin of all 'The King's,'"—
 To Basil gave, to lead the forlorn hope;
 Thrust forward like the spear-point of the march,
 Forbidding all, on pain of death, to speak,
 Before they reached the enemy; then strike;
 Strike home at once, in every vital part!
 And seize his guns, and storm his startled camp
 As with a hurricane's resistless might!
 Proud of the post of honour, Basil bowed
 His thanks to his commander, and retired.
 While one explained to him—"how that same day,
 Resolved to risk no life except his own,
 Bold Colonel Harvey,* in a farmer's garb,
 Driving an ox-team, with a load of hay,
 Had visited the camp at Stony Creek,
 Explored its strength and weakness, and laid down
 A plan for its destruction; and, to-night,
 The General says, 'the bold deed must be done.'"
 And it was done! A gallant feat of arms.
 Not looming large in story; but a stroke,
 As daring and decisive as the best
 Man ever struck for country and for King.
 A great two-handed blow that freed the land,
 And made, thenceforth, all hope of conquest vain.
 Not mine, of choice, to tell of war's alarms,
 Of battle's carnage, of the woods, strewn thick
 With men shot through and through, or gashed with steel,
 Or in the furious onset pinned to trees,
 With ruthless bayonets and left to die.
 While shouts of soldiery, and Indian yells
 From Brant the younger, emulous of his sire,
 Leading his Mohawks racing to the fray,
 Commingled fearfully with roll of drums,
 And trumpets' blare, and rallying cries in vain,
 And cheers of victory, and groans of death.
 Nor will I; but in pity sigh to think,
 The blood of friend and foe like water spilt,
 Was thick with kinship—alien in nought
 But a divided destiny—the rust
 And rancour of those evil days that broke

* Afterwards Sir John Harvey, Governor of New Brunswick.

The old love of the-olden time—like that
Which madly rent God's kingdom into twain,
When Israel rebelled and Judah stood!

PART FOURTH.

There was no reveillé of drums next morn,—
No enemy at Stony Creek—no camp—
But a wild wreck of all things that had been :
As of a great ship shattered on the rocks,
And strewn in fragments on the fatal shore !—
And all was flight that could fly of that host,
Through highways, by-ways—everyway in haste !
As when a roost of pigeons, at the dawn,
Breaks up with crash of wings, and streams away
In thousands all day long—so fled the foe !

The dead and wounded lay in lanes of blood
Where rushed the column of attack, and most
Where Basil led the forlorn hope. Dense groups
Of prisoners, with guns and colours furled,
Arose out of the dim light of the dawn ;
And in their midst the grey-haired Vincent stood,
With Harvey, leaning on their sheathed swords,
With chivalrous hands outstretched, and kindly words,
To greet the captive Generals* of the foe,
And soften thus the cruel fate of war.

Then looking keenly round him, Vincent said :

“ I see not our brave Basil ! though his work
Is plainly visible on every side !—

No harm has happened him, I trust ! Who saw
Young Basil last ? Go quickly, seek and find
The bravest Paladin of all our camp ! ”

Then rose a rumour low as rustling leaves,
Stirred by the South wind rising in the night :—
“ Basil has fallen, wounded, in the dark !

Just as the camp was carried, he was seen
By every man the foremost of the ranks
That led the assault. Amid the hot melee
He must have fallen, no one yet knows where ! ”

And so it was. But Basil had been found,
Even in the dark, by Isa, who had come
With woman's strength of purpose born of love,
Impelled by fears that seemed to cry with tongues
Prophetic of the evil that befell.

* Generals Winder and Chandler, both taken at Stony Creek.

Ere wholly ceased the battle, Isa knew
 Basil had fallen, and without a thought
 Of her own danger, bearing in her hand
 A lighted fackel,* plunged into the wood
 Through which had streamed the conflict ; sought and found
 Beneath a barberry, that still hung red
 With last year's corals, like fresh gouttes of blood,
 Her hero lying in his gore. His head
 Rested upon the knee of that brave man,
 Who begged to follow him in the attack.
 His eyes, whose glances had so thrilled her soul,
 Were closed like sleep ; for he awaited death
 With quietness, as throbb'd his life away,
 Unconscious of the world and all its pains.

The man was vainly trying with rude hand
 Of a rough soldier, yet with tenderness,
 To staunch the scarlet stream that would not stop ;
 And through the darkness called for light and help,
 Till Isa heard him, and thus Basil found.
 The maiden gave a gasp of pain,—one such
 Comes in a lifetime only ; when a stab
 Of worse than death strikes home, and still we live.

She knelt transfixed, but cried not for her pain,
 For noblest natures only inly weep ;
 And kissed the pallid cheek that seemed to her
 To turn as if half conscious she was by.
 With trembling hands, yet firm, she closed the wound,
 And rent her garment's softest lawn to bind,
 And sent for instant help—a litter—men
 To bear it, with the burden of two lives—
 Her own and Basil's, to the nearest tent.

Help came at once—good help ! men of " The King's "
 And officers begrimed with powder. They
 With pity as of woman's tenderness,
 Laid Basil on the litter. Shoulder high,
 They bore him softly, safely to the camp,
 While Isa walked beside them, watchful that
 No stone to stumble at lay in the way.
 And Vincent came, heroic Harvey, Brant—
 And all " The King's " looked on with softened eyes,
 As he passed through the ranks, amid the guns
 And captured flags that dropped in sad salute
 Before the dying hero of the fight,
 Before the gentle girl, whom many knew
 Betrothed to Basil, and each head was bared

* A torch made of thin strips of hickory bark tied together—so called in the Niagara District.
 The word is German

In silent sympathy. For every one
Loved Basil, and admired the faithful girl,
Whose grief and beauty touched each manly breast.

Hours, days, and weeks passed by of hopes and fears
For that dear life, that seemed a grain of dust,
So light and loose, a breath would blow away ;
And still he lived—a gift to Isa's prayers,
Who never ceased her watch beside his couch,
And welcomed his awaking to himself,
His recognition of her, with the joy
The angels of the resurrection feel,
When they raise up to life the happy dead.

In heart, in intellect, and speech, at length
Basil was all himself—yea more ; his soul
Had been caught up to higher planes and seen
The summits of the distant hills of God,
Sun-tipped with heavenly light, and in his dreams
Had flashed the garments of the shining ones,
Who bide with man to ease life's miseries,
Or comfort him with anodyne of death
When God the Merciful shall so decree.

But he was maimed forever ! Rise or walk
Without man's help or woman's, never more
Would Basil. Once the swiftest in the race,
The foremost in the battle or the dance ;
The gayest gallant e'er took woman's eye,
Or with his manliness won woman's heart !

The summer waxed and waned, till turned the leaf
Red as the war-bird, on the maple tree,
The storm of strife rolled back upon the lines
Where devastation reigned. No husbandman
Had time to labour twixt the clash of arms.
The land was left unploughed, the fruit unplucked,
Except where faithful women went afield.
Last to despond of their dear country's cause,
The first to arm their sons in its defence
And send them forth. Each man was at the front
In the last grapple with the foe, before
Returning winter made a Truce of God,
Enforcing peace upon the rage of man.
Back, ever back they drove the enemy,
Till Newark was retaken—what was left
Of its poor ashes and the blackened heaps
Of its once happy homes, its people all
Cast houseless forth amid December's snows.

But terrible the Nemesis of war !
When Justice sternly cried : " It must be done ! "

What could they do but follow in the track
 Of the destroyers of fair Newark town?
 With torches kindled at its smouldering fires,
 They crossed the broad Niagara; stormed the forts,
 And with the besom of destruction, swept
 The frontier clean and clear from end to end!

Then from war's miseries full hard to bear,
 The land had rest and breathing time again.
 Hope born of resolution not to fail,
 Was cheered by royal words; and England's aid
 Lavish as nobly promised, was at hand
 To conquer in their trials yet to come.

Basil was not forgotten all those days.
 No courier ever passed fair Isa's home,
 Where he lay lingering, but message brought
 Of kind remembrance from the gallant "King's."
 His heart was with his comrades, and repined
 He could not share their struggles in the field,
 Nor pluck at victory with his own right hand.
 Isa alone could wean his thoughts away
 From what could never be! taught him instead
 To look for better things than this world's fame;
 Not much when won—not oft untimely lost!
 After earth's disappointments, still to look
 With her to heaven in faith for their reward;
 Where love, however crossed, so it be true,
 Is sure of happy consummation there.

Sometimes, wheeled to the window, Basil lay
 And watched the wind-swept pines and azure lake,
 Or gazed on quiet nights at starry depths,
 As if to pluck their secret from their hearts,
 And found it not; and then to Isa turned,
 Who constantly sat by, with work, or book,
 Or wise converse, that healed with softest touch
 Some sore of false philosophy, or moved
 Some doubt and stone of stumbling from the way.
 His thoughts were loosened from their former bands,
 As Lazarus from his grave clothes, when the Lord
 Recalled his spirit back to mortal life.
 In Isa's eyes he saw a light not born
 Of earthly ray—a glimpse of love divine.
 He recognized the secret he had sought;
 Hid from the godless wise—revealed to babes,
 How to Judean Shepherds angels sang
 Of God made manifest in flesh—the Son;
 The Word, that all things comprehends and fills—

The Alpha and Omega, First and Last,
And all that sacred letters can express,
In languages and tongues of God to man.

Said Basil : " Now I know three things above
High mark of worldly wisdom,—Isa's love
For me the helpless one !—a thing divine !
And next the love for truths above our reach,
Above the reach and earthly needs of man.
And last ; those yearnings that possess the soul
For immortality and life to come !
To apprehend the infinite, no less
Than an eternity we need. Some sphere
Where love shall blossom to its perfect flower,
And full fruition, beautiful, complete,
The complement of what is here begun,
And left unfinished—broken in the stem !"
His voice grew tremulous with tears suppressed.
" As mine is now a useless burthen thrown
Upon thy love and labour."

Isa turned,
As when with soft reproach the risen Lord
Looked upon Magdalene, and " Mary ! " said ;
So one word uttered she—she could no more—
" Basil ! " and knelt and raised his pallid hands
So thin and wasted to her lips, and pressed
Them long and lovingly, while fell hot tears
Upon them. " Basil ! " that was all she said.
The sweet reproof dropped like a blessing down
Of manna, on his hungry soul. He knew
That all the seven labours poets feign,
Were nought compared to this true woman's love !

Some weeks of mortal pain with patience borne,
As manly natures bear them, left his life
Receding like a wave at ebb of tide,
Without reflux, and running out to sea.
The unknown shore loomed up not far away,
And each day nearer. In his eyes was seen
A strange expectancy ; and Isa marked
The change from day to day, foreboding all,
And doubling her sweet services of love,
More anxious ever with the greater need.

All books henceforth were laid aside, save one,
The living Word, whose proof is in itself ;
As Eden's trees have in themselves their seeds,
Or the Shechinah shines with its own light.
And if like Jews, men ask a sign ; behold !

The Word is its own sign and miracle !—
 A greater wonder than the sun in heaven.
 As greater is the fount of living truth
 And goodness, than the lifeless orb of day !
 He listened, and he learned because he loved :
 Read by those gentle lips and wise, he caught
 Some glimpses of the glory, darts without
 The veil, in cloven tongues of fire, that speak
 In everlasting Pentecost to men.

Then weeks drew into days, and shorter arcs
 Measure the hours of Basil. A great calm
 Fell on his troubled spirit, such as stills
 The ocean waves at sunset, when the storm
 Has overpast, and all the west aglow,
 Is ribbed with golden cirri, bar on bar,
 Above the crimson orb that slowly sinks
 And ends the day.

Then Basil was at rest,
 Her loving voice had reached his heart, and made
 An easy way for truth to enter in
 The Gospel now was read of choice. St. John,
 That witness true whom Sophists rage to kill,
 Of God revealed in Christ. The Word made flesh
 The Way, the Truth, the Life. The mystery
 Of man insoluble ; but now made plain.
 These formed loved themes of converse to the end.

Then days to hours, and hours to minutes close
 Round dying Basil. A few friends he loved,
 His comrades of " The King's," surround his couch.
 But nearest Isa kneels by him and takes
 With sacred kisses from his loving lips,
 His parting words inaudible to all
 Save her, his fondest love and last farewell.
 Then kissed he Isa's hand, and softly placed
 It o'er his eyes, that saw the light no more !
 He breathed her name and died without a pang !
 A hero born, and worthy of the race
 From which he sprang. A race ordained of old
 With peace or war to rule with right, and win
 The love of women worthy of such men.

Upon the heights of Burlington, among
 The grassy graves in ranks of comrades dead,
 Who side by side had stood in ranks of war,
 They bore young Basil with slow march and sad
 Of muffled drums, and trumpet's wailing sound,
 And laid him in the soft and kindly mould

With ringing volleys for a last farewell—
An honoured soldier in a soldier's grave !
His General followed him and all "The King's,"
With honest grief for one so brave and good,
Who led the storm at Stony Creek and fell,
Willing to die for sake of what was won,
The victory that saved the Forest Land.

So Basil died, and Isa loved him still.
In years to come, and many came, ere she
Rejoined him in the mansions of the blessed,
The grassy grave at Burlington she kept
With her own loving hands, that never tired
To deck with flowers. As every season came
She silently renewed her heart's young vows,
And waited till Christ called her to come in !
So Basil died, and Isa loved him still.

NIAGARA, January, 1880.

