

*Canto Five*

*The Finding of the Soul*

ONWARD she passed seeking the soul's mystic cave.  
At first she stepped into a night of God.  
The light was quenched that helps the labouring world,  
The power that struggles and stumbles in our life;  
This inefficient mind gave up its thoughts,  
The striving heart its unavailing hopes.  
All knowledge failed and the Idea's forms  
And Wisdom screened in awe her lowly head  
Feeling a Truth too great for thought or speech,  
Formless, ineffable, for ever the same.  
An innocent and holy Ignorance  
Adored like one who worships formless God  
The unseen Light she could not claim nor own.  
In a simple purity of emptiness  
Her mind knelt down before the unknowable.  
All was abolished save her naked self  
And the prostrate yearning of her surrendered heart:  
There was no strength in her, no pride of force;  
The lofty burning of desire had sunk  
Ashamed, a vanity of separate self,  
The hope of spiritual greatness fled,  
Salvation she asked not nor a heavenly crown:  
Humility seemed now too proud a state.  
Her self was nothing, God alone was all,  
Yet God she knew not but only knew he was.  
A sacred darkness brooded now within,  
The world was a deep darkness great and nude.  
This void held more than all the teeming worlds,  
This blank felt more than all that Time has borne,  
This dark knew dumbly, immensely the Unknown.  
But all was formless, voiceless, infinite.

As might a shadow walk in a shadowy scene,  
A small nought passing through a mightier Nought,  
A night of person in a bare outline  
Crossing a fathomless impersonal Night,  
Silent she moved, empty and absolute.  
In endless Time her soul reached a wide end,  
The spaceless Vast became her spirit's place.  
At last a change approached, the emptiness broke;  
A wave rippled within, the world had stirred;  
Once more her inner self became her space.  
There was felt a blissful nearness to the goal;  
Heaven leaned low to kiss the sacred hill,  
The air trembled with passion and delight.  
A rose of splendour on a tree of dreams,  
The face of Dawn out of mooned twilight grew.  
Day came, priest of a sacrifice of joy  
Into the worshipping silence of her world;  
He carried immortal lustre as his robe,  
Trailed heaven like a purple scarf and wore  
As his vermilion caste-mark a red sun.  
As if an old remembered dream come true,  
She recognised in her prophetic mind  
The imperishable lustre of that sky,  
The tremulous sweetness of that happy air  
And, covered from mind's view and life's approach,  
The mystic cavern in the sacred hill  
And knew the dwelling of her secret soul.  
As if in some Elysian occult depth,  
Truth's last retreat from thought's profaning touch,  
As if in a rock-temple's solitude hid,  
God's refuge from an ignorant worshipping world,  
It lay withdrawn even from life's inner sense,  
Receding from the entangled heart's desire.  
A marvellous brooding twilight met the eyes  
And a holy stillness held that voiceless space.  
An awful dimness wrapped the great rock-doors

Carved in the massive stone of Matter's trance.  
Two golden serpents round the lintel curled,  
Enveloping it with their pure and dreadful strength,  
Looked out with wisdom's deep and luminous eyes.  
An eagle covered it with wide conquering wings:  
Flames of self-lost immobile reverie,  
Doves crowded the grey musing cornices  
Like sculptured postures of white-bosomed peace.  
Across the threshold's sleep she entered in  
And found herself amid great figures of gods  
Conscious in stone and living without breath,  
Watching with fixed regard the soul of man,  
Executive figures of the cosmic self,  
World-symbols of immutable potency.  
On the walls covered with significant shapes  
Looked at her the life-scene of man and beast  
And the high meaning of the life of gods,  
The power and necessity of these numberless worlds,  
And faces of beings and stretches of world-space  
Spoke the succinct and inexhaustible  
Hieratic message of the climbing planes.  
In their immensitude signing infinity  
They were the extension of the self of God  
And housed, impassively receiving all,  
His figures and his small and mighty acts  
And his passion and his birth and life and death  
And his return to immortality.  
To the abiding and eternal is their climb,  
To the pure existence everywhere the same,  
To the sheer consciousness and the absolute force  
And the unimaginable and formless bliss,  
To the mirth in Time and the timeless mystery  
Of the triune being who is all and one  
And yet is no one but himself apart.  
There was no step of breathing men, no sound,  
Only the living nearness of the soul.

Yet all the worlds and God himself were there,  
For every symbol was a reality  
And brought the presence which had given it life.  
All this she saw and inly felt and knew  
Not by some thought of mind but by the self.  
A light not born of sun or moon or fire,  
A light that dwelt within and saw within  
Shedding an intimate visibility  
Made secrecy more revealing than the word:  
Our sight and sense are a fallible gaze and touch  
And only the spirit's vision is wholly true.  
As thus she passed in that mysterious place  
Through room and room, through door and rock-hewn door,  
She felt herself made one with all she saw.  
A sealed identity within her woke;  
She knew herself the Beloved of the Supreme:  
These Gods and Goddesses were he and she:  
The Mother was she of Beauty and Delight,  
The Word in Brahma's vast creating clasp,  
The World-Puissance on almighty Shiva's lap, —  
The Master and the Mother of all lives  
Watching the worlds their twin regard had made,  
And Krishna and Radha for ever entwined in bliss,  
The Adorer and Adored self-lost and one.  
In the last chamber on a golden seat  
One sat whose shape no vision could define;  
Only one felt the world's unattainable fount,  
A Power of which she was a straying Force,  
An invisible Beauty, goal of the world's desire,  
A Sun of which all knowledge is a beam,  
A Greatness without whom no life could be.  
Thence all departed into silent self,  
And all became formless and pure and bare.  
Then through a tunnel dug in the last rock  
She came out where there shone a deathless sun.  
A house was there all made of flame and light

And crossing a wall of doorless living fire  
There suddenly she met her secret soul.

A being stood immortal in transience,  
Deathless dallying with momentary things,  
In whose wide eyes of tranquil happiness  
Which pity and sorrow could not abrogate  
Infinity turned its gaze on finite shapes:  
Observer of the silent steps of the hours,  
Eternity upheld the minute's acts  
And the passing scenes of the Everlasting's play.  
In the mystery of its selecting will,  
In the Divine Comedy a participant,  
The Spirit's conscious representative,  
God's delegate in our humanity,  
Comrade of the universe, the Transcendent's ray,  
She had come into the mortal body's room  
To play at ball with Time and Circumstance.  
A joy in the world her master movement here,  
The passion of the game lighted her eyes:  
A smile on her lips welcomed earth's bliss and grief,  
A laugh was her return to pleasure and pain.  
All things she saw as a masquerade of Truth  
Disguised in the costumes of Ignorance,  
Crossing the years to immortality;  
All she could front with the strong spirit's peace.  
But since she knows the toil of mind and life  
As a mother feels and shares her children's lives,  
She puts forth a small portion of herself,  
A being no bigger than the thumb of man  
Into a hidden region of the heart  
To face the pang and to forget the bliss,  
To share the suffering and endure earth's wounds  
And labour mid the labour of the stars.  
This in us laughs and weeps, suffers the stroke,  
Exults in victory, struggles for the crown;

Identified with the mind and body and life,  
It takes on itself their anguish and defeat,  
Bleeds with Fate's whips and hangs upon the cross,  
Yet is the unwounded and immortal self  
Supporting the actor in the human scene.  
Through this she sends us her glory and her powers,  
Pushes to wisdom's heights, through misery's gulfs;  
She gives us strength to do our daily task  
And sympathy that partakes of others' grief  
And the little strength we have to help our race,  
We who must fill the role of the universe  
Acting itself out in a slight human shape  
And on our shoulders carry the struggling world.  
This is in us the godhead small and marred;  
In this human portion of divinity  
She seats the greatness of the Soul in Time  
To uplift from light to light, from power to power,  
Till on a heavenly peak it stands, a king.  
In body weak, in its heart an invincible might,  
It climbs stumbling, held up by an unseen hand,  
A toiling spirit in a mortal shape.  
Here in this chamber of flame and light they met;  
They looked upon each other, knew themselves,  
The secret deity and its human part,  
The calm immortal and the struggling soul.  
Then with a magic transformation's speed  
They rushed into each other and grew one.

Once more she was human upon earthly soil  
In the muttering night amid the rain-swept woods  
And the rude cottage where she sat in trance:  
That subtle world withdrew deeply within  
Behind the sun-veil of the inner sight.  
But now the half-opened lotus bud of her heart  
Had bloomed and stood disclosed to the earthly ray;  
In an image shone revealed her secret soul.

There was no wall severing the soul and mind,  
No mystic fence guarding from the claims of life.  
In its deep lotus home her being sat  
As if on concentration's marble seat,  
Calling the mighty Mother of the worlds  
To make this earthly tenement her house.  
As in a flash from a supernal light,  
A living image of the original Power,  
A face, a form came down into her heart  
And made of it its temple and pure abode.  
But when its feet had touched the quivering bloom,  
A mighty movement rocked the inner space  
As if a world were shaken and found its soul:  
Out of the Inconscient's soulless mindless night  
A flaming Serpent rose released from sleep.  
It rose billowing its coils and stood erect  
And climbing mightily, stormily on its way  
It touched her centres with its flaming mouth;  
As if a fiery kiss had broken their sleep,  
They bloomed and laughed surcharged with light and bliss.  
Then at the crown it joined the Eternal's space.  
In the flower of the head, in the flower of Matter's base,  
In each divine stronghold and Nature-knot  
It held together the mystic stream which joins  
The viewless summits with the unseen depths,  
The string of forts that make the frail defence  
Safeguarding us against the enormous world,  
Our lines of self-expression in its Vast.  
An image sat of the original Power  
Wearing the mighty Mother's form and face.  
Armed, bearer of the weapon and the sign  
Whose occult might no magic can imitate,  
Manifold yet one she sat, a guardian force:  
A saviour gesture stretched her lifted arm,  
And symbol of some native cosmic strength,  
A sacred beast lay prone below her feet,

A silent flame-eyed mass of living force.  
All underwent a high celestial change:  
Breaking the black Inconscient's blind mute wall,  
Effacing the circles of the Ignorance,  
Powers and divinities burst flaming forth;  
Each part of the being trembling with delight  
Lay overwhelmed with tides of happiness  
And saw her hand in every circumstance  
And felt her touch in every limb and cell.  
In the country of the lotus of the head  
Which thinking mind has made its busy space,  
In the castle of the lotus twixt the brows  
Whence it shoots the arrows of its sight and will,  
In the passage of the lotus of the throat  
Where speech must rise and the expressing mind  
And the heart's impulse run towards word and act,  
A glad uplift and a new working came.  
The immortal's thoughts displaced our bounded view,  
The immortal's thoughts earth's drab idea and sense;  
All things now bore a deeper heavenlier sense.  
A glad clear harmony marked their truth's outline,  
Reset the balance and measures of the world.  
Each shape showed its occult design, unveiled  
God's meaning in it for which it was made  
And the vivid splendour of his artist thought.  
A channel of the mighty Mother's choice,  
The immortal's will took into its calm control  
Our blind or erring government of life;  
A loose republic once of wants and needs,  
Then bowed to the uncertain sovereign mind,  
Life now obeyed to a diviner rule  
And every act became an act of God.  
In the kingdom of the lotus of the heart  
Love chanting its pure hymeneal hymn  
Made life and body mirrors of sacred joy  
And all the emotions gave themselves to God.

In the navel lotus' broad imperial range  
Its proud ambitions and its master lusts  
Were tamed into instruments of a great calm sway  
To do a work of God on earthly soil.  
In the narrow nether centre's petty parts  
Its childish game of daily dwarf desires  
Was changed into a sweet and boisterous play,  
A romp of little gods with life in Time.  
In the deep place where once the Serpent slept,  
There came a grip on Matter's giant powers  
For large utilities in life's little space;  
A firm ground was made for Heaven's descending might.  
Behind all reigned her sovereign deathless soul:  
Casting aside its veil of Ignorance,  
Allied to gods and cosmic beings and powers  
It built the harmony of its human state;  
Surrendered into the great World-Mother's hands  
Only she obeyed her sole supreme behest  
In the enigma of the Inconscient's world.  
A secret soul behind supporting all  
Is master and witness of our ignorant life,  
Admits the Person's look and Nature's role.  
But once the hidden doors are flung apart  
Then the veiled king steps out in Nature's front;  
A Light comes down into the Ignorance,  
Its heavy painful knot loosens its grasp:  
The mind becomes a mastered instrument  
And life a hue and figure of the soul.  
All happily grows towards knowledge and towards bliss.  
A divine Puissance then takes Nature's place  
And pushes the movements of our body and mind;  
Possessor of our passionate hopes and dreams,  
The beloved despot of our thoughts and acts,  
She streams into us with her unbound force,  
Into mortal limbs the Immortal's rapture and power.  
An inner law of beauty shapes our lives;

Our words become the natural speech of Truth,  
Each thought is a ripple on a sea of Light.  
Then sin and virtue leave the cosmic lists;  
They struggle no more in our delivered hearts:  
Our acts chime with God's simple natural good  
Or serve the rule of a supernal Right.  
All moods unlovely, evil and untrue  
Forsake their stations in fierce disarray  
And hide their shame in the subconscious's dusk.  
Then lifts the mind a cry of victory:  
"O soul, my soul, we have created Heaven,  
Within we have found the kingdom here of God,  
His fortress built in a loud ignorant world.  
Our life is entrenched between two rivers of Light,  
We have turned space into a gulf of peace  
And made the body a Capitol of bliss.  
What more, what more, if more must still be done?"  
In the slow process of the evolving spirit,  
In the brief stade between a death and birth  
A first perfection's stage is reached at last;  
Out of the wood and stone of our nature's stuff  
A temple is shaped where the high gods could live.  
Even if the struggling world is left outside  
One man's perfection still can save the world.  
There is won a new proximity to the skies,  
A first betrothal of the Earth to Heaven,  
A deep concordat between Truth and Life:  
A camp of God is pitched in human time.

END OF CANTO FIVE