

Canto Two

Satyavan

ALL SHE remembered on this day of Fate,
The road that hazarded not the solemn depths
But turned away to flee to human homes,
The wilderness with its mighty monotone,
The morning like a lustrous seer above,
The passion of the summits lost in heaven,
The titan murmur of the endless woods.
As if a wicket gate to joy were there
Ringed in with voiceless hint and magic sign,
Upon the margin of an unknown world
Reclined the curve of a sun-held recess;
Groves with strange flowers like eyes of gazing nymphs
Peered from their secrecy into open space,
Boughs whispering to a constancy of light
Sheltered a dim and screened felicity,
And slowly a supine inconstant breeze
Ran like a fleeting sigh of happiness
Over slumbrous grasses pranked with green and gold.
Hidden in the forest's bosom of loneliness
Amid the leaves the inmate voices called,
Sweet like desires enamoured and unseen,
Cry answering to low insistent cry.
Behind slept emerald dumb remotenesses,
Haunt of a Nature passionate, veiled, denied
To all but her own vision lost and wild.
Earth in this beautiful refuge free from cares
Murmured to the soul a song of strength and peace.
Only one sign was there of a human tread:
A single path, shot thin and arrowlike
Into this bosom of vast and secret life,
Pierced its enormous dream of solitude.

Here first she met on the uncertain earth
The one for whom her heart had come so far.
As might a soul on Nature's background limned
Stand out for a moment in a house of dream
Created by the ardent breath of life,
So he appeared against the forest verge
Inset twixt green relief and golden ray.
As if a weapon of the living Light,
Erect and lofty like a spear of God
His figure led the splendour of the morn.
Noble and clear as the broad peaceful heavens
A tablet of young wisdom was his brow;
Freedom's imperious beauty curved his limbs,
The joy of life was on his open face.
His look was a wide daybreak of the gods,
His head was a youthful Rishi's touched with light,
His body was a lover's and a king's.
In the magnificent dawning of his force
Built like a moving statue of delight
He illumined the border of the forest page.
Out of the ignorant eager toil of the years
Abandoning man's loud drama he had come
Led by the wisdom of an adverse Fate
To meet the ancient Mother in her groves.
In her divine communion he had grown
A foster-child of beauty and solitude,
Heir to the centuries of the lonely wise,
A brother of the sunshine and the sky,
A wanderer communing with depth and marge.
A Veda-knower of the unwritten book
Perusing the mystic scripture of her forms,
He had caught her hierophant significances,
Her sphered immense imaginations learned,
Taught by sublimities of stream and wood
And voices of the sun and star and flame
And chant of the magic singers on the boughs

And the dumb teaching of four-footed things.
Helping with confident steps her slow great hands
He leaned to her influence like a flower to rain
And, like the flower and tree a natural growth,
Widened with the touches of her shaping hours.
The mastery free natures have was his
And their assent to joy and spacious calm;
One with the single Spirit inhabiting all,
He laid experience at the Godhead's feet;
His mind was open to her infinite mind,
His acts were rhythmic with her primal force;
He had subdued his mortal thought to hers.
That day he had turned from his accustomed paths;
For One who, knowing every moment's load,
Can move in all our studied or careless steps,
Had laid the spell of destiny on his feet
And drawn him to the forest's flowering verge.

At first her glance that took life's million shapes
Impartially to people its treasure-house
Along with sky and flower and hill and star,
Dwelt rather on the bright harmonious scene.
It saw the green-gold of the slumbrous sward,
The grasses quivering with the slow wind's tread,
The branches haunted by the wild bird's call.
Awake to Nature, vague as yet to life,
The eager prisoner from the Infinite,
The immortal wrestler in its mortal house,
Its pride, power, passion of a striving God,
It saw this image of veiled deity,
This thinking master creature of the earth,
This last result of the beauty of the stars,
But only saw like fair and common forms
The artist spirit needs not for its work
And puts aside in memory's shadowy rooms.
A look, a turn decides our ill-poised fate.
Thus in the hour that most concerned her all,

Wandering unwarned by the slow surface mind,
The heedless scout beneath her tenting lids
Admired indifferent beauty and cared not
To wake her body's spirit to its king.
So might she have passed by on chance ignorant roads
Missing the call of Heaven, losing life's aim,
But the god touched in time her conscious soul.
Her vision settled, caught and all was changed.
Her mind at first dwelt in ideal dreams,
Those intimate transmuters of earth's signs
That make known things a hint of unseen spheres,
And saw in him the genius of the spot,
A symbol figure standing mid earth's scenes,
A king of life outlined in delicate air.
Yet this was but a moment's reverie;
For suddenly her heart looked out at him,
The passionate seeing used thought cannot match,
And knew one nearer than its own close strings.
All in a moment was surprised and seized,
All in unconscious ecstasy lain wrapped
Or under imagination's coloured lids
Held up in a large mirror-air of dream,
Broke forth in flame to recreate the world,
And in that flame to new things she was born.
A mystic tumult from her depths arose;
Haled, smitten erect like one who dreamed at ease,
Life ran to gaze from every gate of sense:
Thoughts indistinct and glad in moon-mist heavens,
Feelings as when a universe takes birth,
Swept through the turmoil of her bosom's space
Invaded by a swarm of golden gods:
Arising to a hymn of wonder's priests
Her soul flung wide its doors to this new sun.
An alchemy worked, the transmutation came;
The missioned face had wrought the Master's spell.
In the nameless light of two approaching eyes

A swift and fated turning of her days
Appeared and stretched to a gleam of unknown worlds.
Then trembling with the mystic shock her heart
Moved in her breast and cried out like a bird
Who hears his mate upon a neighbouring bough.
Hooves trampling fast, wheels largely stumbling ceased;
The chariot stood like an arrested wind.
And Satyavan looked out from his soul's doors
And felt the enchantment of her liquid voice
Fill his youth's purple ambience and endured
The haunting miracle of a perfect face.
Mastered by the honey of a strange flower-mouth,
Drawn to soul-spaces opening round a brow,
He turned to the vision like a sea to the moon
And suffered a dream of beauty and of change,
Discovered the aureole round a mortal's head,
Adored a new divinity in things.
His self-bound nature foundered as in fire;
His life was taken into another's life.
The splendid lonely idols of his brain
Fell prostrate from their bright sufficiencies,
As at the touch of a new infinite,
To worship a godhead greater than their own.
An unknown imperious force drew him to her.
Marvelling he came across the golden sword:
Gaze met close gaze and clung in sight's embrace.
A visage was there, noble and great and calm,
As if encircled by a halo of thought,
A span, an arch of meditating light,
As though some secret nimbus half was seen;
Her inner vision still remembering knew
A forehead that wore the crown of all her past,
Two eyes her constant and eternal stars,
Comrade and sovereign eyes that claimed her soul,
Lids known through many lives, large frames of love.
He met in her regard his future's gaze,

A promise and a presence and a fire,
Saw an embodiment of aeonic dreams,
A mystery of the rapture for which all
Yearns in this world of brief mortality
Made in material shape his very own.
This golden figure given to his grasp
Hid in its breast the key of all his aims,
A spell to bring the Immortal's bliss on earth,
To mate with heaven's truth our mortal thought,
To lift earth-hearts nearer the Eternal's sun.
In these great spirits now incarnate here
Love brought down power out of eternity
To make of life his new undying base.
His passion surged a wave from fathomless deeps;
It leaped to earth from far forgotten heights,
But kept its nature of infinity.
On the dumb bosom of this oblivious globe
Although as unknown beings we seem to meet,
Our lives are not aliens nor as strangers join,
Moved to each other by a causeless force.
The soul can recognise its answering soul
Across dividing Time and, on life's roads
Absorbed wrapped traveller, turning it recovers
Familiar splendours in an unknown face
And touched by the warning finger of swift love
It thrills again to an immortal joy
Wearing a mortal body for delight.
There is a Power within that knows beyond
Our knowings; we are greater than our thoughts,
And sometimes earth unveils that vision here.
To live, to love are signs of infinite things,
Love is a glory from eternity's spheres.
Abased, disfigured, mocked by baser might
That steal his name and shape and ecstasy,
He is still the godhead by which all can change.
A mystery wakes in our inconscient stuff,

A bliss is born that can remake our life.
Love dwells in us like an unopened flower
Awaiting a rapid moment of the soul,
Or he roams in his charmed sleep mid thoughts and things;
The child-god is at play, he seeks himself
In many hearts and minds and living forms:
He lingers for a sign that he can know
And, when it comes, wakes blindly to a voice,
A look, a touch, the meaning of a face.
His instrument the dim corporeal mind,
Of celestial insight now forgetful grown,
He seizes on some sign of outward charm
To guide him mid the throng of Nature's hints,
Reads heavenly truths into earth's semblances,
Desires the image for the godhead's sake,
Divines the immortalities of form
And takes the body for the sculptured soul.
Love's adoration like a mystic seer
Through vision looks at the invisible,
In earth's alphabet finds a godlike sense;
But the mind only thinks, "Behold the one
For whom my life has waited long unfilled,
Behold the sudden sovereign of my days."
Heart feels for heart, limb cries for answering limb;
All strives to enforce the unity all is.
Too far from the Divine, Love seeks his truth
And Life is blind and the instruments deceive
And Powers are there that labour to debase.
Still can the vision come, the joy arrive.
Rare is the cup fit for love's nectar wine,
As rare the vessel that can hold God's birth;
A soul made ready through a thousand years
Is the living mould of a supreme Descent.
These knew each other though in forms thus strange.
Although to sight unknown, though life and mind
Had altered to hold a new significance,

These bodies summed the drift of numberless births,
And the spirit to the spirit was the same.
Amazed by a joy for which they had waited long,
The lovers met upon their different paths,
Travellers across the limitless plains of Time
Together drawn from fate-led journeyings
In the self-closed solitude of their human past,
To a swift rapturous dream of future joy
And the unexpected present of these eyes.
By the revealing greatness of a look,
Form-smitten the spirit's memory woke in sense.
The mist was torn that lay between two lives;
Her heart unveiled and his to find her turned;
Attracted as in heaven star by star,
They wondered at each other and rejoiced
And wove affinity in a silent gaze.
A moment passed that was eternity's ray,
An hour began, the matrix of new Time.

END OF CANTO TWO