Urvasie
CANTO I

Pururavus from Titan conflict ceased
Turned worldwards, through illimitable space
Had travelled like a star ’twixt earth and heaven
Slowly and brightly. Late our mortal air
He breathed; for downward now the hooves divine
Trampling out fire with sound before them went,
And the great earth rushed up towards him, green.
With the first line of dawn he touched the peaks,
Nor paused upon those savage heights, but reached
Inferior summits subject to the rain,
And rested. Looking northwards thence he saw
The giant snows upclimbing to the sky,
And felt the mighty silence. In his ear
The noise of a retreating battle was,
Wide crash of wheels and hard impetuous blare
Of trumpets and the sullen march of hosts.
Therefore with joy he drank into his soul
The virgin silence inaccessible
Of mountains and divined his mother’s breasts.
But as he listened to the hush, a thought
Came to him from the spring and he turned round
And gazed into the quiet maiden East,
Watching that birth of day, as if a line
Of some great poem out of dimness grew,
Slowly unfolding into perfect speech.
The grey lucidity and pearliness
Bloomed more and more, and over earth chaste again
The freshness of the primal dawn returned,
Life coming with a virginal sharp strength,
Renewed as from the streams of Paradise.
Nearer it drew now to him and he saw
Out of the widening glory move a face
Of dawn, a body fresh from mystery,
Enveloped with a prophecy of light
More rich than perfect splendours. It was she,
The golden virgin, Usha, mother of life,
Yet virgin. In a silence sweet she came,
Unveiled, soft-smiling, like a bride, rose-cheeked,
Her bosom full of flowers, the morning wind
Stirring her hair and all about her gold.
Nor sole she came. Behind her faces laughed
Delicious, girls of heaven whose beauties ease
The labour of the battle-weary Gods;
They in the golden dawn of things sprang gold,
From youth of the immortal Ocean born,
They youthful and immortal, and the waves
Were in their feet and in their voices fresh
As foam, and Ocean in their souls was love.
Laughing they ran among the clouds, their hair
And raiment all a tempest in the breeze.
The sky grew glorious with them and their feet
A restless loveliness and glad eyes full
Of morning and divine faces bent back
For the imperious kisses of the wind.
So danced they numberless as dew-drops gleam,
Ménaca, Misracayshie, Mullica,
Rumbha, Nelabha, Shela, Nolinie,
Lolita, Lavonya and Tilòttama,—
Many delightful names; among them she.
And seeing her Pururavus the king
Shuddered as of felicity afraid,
And all the wide heart of Pururavus
Moved like the sea — when with a coming wind
Great Ocean lifts in far expectancy
Waiting to feel the shock, so was he moved
By expectation of her face. For this
Was secret in its own divinity
Like a high sun of splendour, or half seen
All troubled with her hair. Yet Paradise
Breathed from her limbs and tresses wonderful,
With odours and with dreams. Then for a space
Voiceless the great king stood and, troubled, watched
That lovely advent, laughter and delight
Gaining upon the world. At last he sighed
And the vague passion broke from him in speech
Heard by the solitude. “O thou strong god,
Who art thou graspest me with hands of fire,
Making my soul all colour? Surely I thought
The hills would move and the eternal stars
Deviate from their rounds immutable,
Never Pururavus; yet lo! I fall.
My soul whirls alien and I hear amazed
The galloping of uncontrollable steeds.
Men said of me: ‘The King Pururavus
Grows more than man; he lifts to azure heaven
In vast equality his spirit sublime.’
Why sink I now towards attractive earth?
And thou, who art thou, mystery! golden wonder!
Moving enchantress! Wast thou not a part
Of soft auspicious evenings I have loved?
Have I not seen thy beauty on the clouds?
In moonlight and in starlight and in fire?
Some flower whose brightness was a trouble? a face
Whose memory like a picture lived with me?
A thought I had, but lost? O was thy voice
A vernal repetition in some grove,
Telling of lilies clustered o’er with bees
And quiet waters open to the moon?
Surely in some past life I loved thy name,
And syllable by syllable now strive
Its sweetness to recall. It seems the grace
Of visible things, of hushed and lonely snows
And burning great inexorable noons,
And towns and valleys and the mountain winds.
All beauty of earthliness is in thee, all
Luxurious experience of the soul.
O comest thou because I left thy charm
Aiming at purity, O comest thou,
Goddess, to avenge thyself with beauty? Come!
Unveil thyself from light! limit thyself,
O infinite grace, that I may find, may clasp.
For surely in my heart I know thou bearest
A name that naturally weds with mine,
And I perceive our union magically
Inevitable as a perfect verse
Of Veda. Set thy feet upon my heart,
O Goddess! woman, to my bosom move!
I am Pururavus, O Urvasie.”

As when a man to the grey face of dawn
Awaking from an unremembered dream,
Repines at life awhile and buffets back
The wave of old familiar thoughts, and hating
His usual happiness and usual cares
Strives to recall a dream’s felicity; —
Long strives in vain and rolls his painful thought
Through many alien ways, when sudden comes
A flash, another, and the vision burns
Like lightning in the brain, so leaped that name
Into the musing of the troubled king.
Joyous he cried aloud and lashed his steeds:
They, rearing, leaped from Himalaya high
And trampled with their hooves the southern wind.

But now a cry broke from the lovely crowd
Of fear and tremulous astonishment;
And they huddled together like doves dismayed
Who see the inevitable talons near
And rush of cruel wings. ’Twas not from him,
For him they saw not yet, but from the north
A fear was on them, and Pururavus
Heard a low roar as of a distant cloud.
He turned half-wrathful. In the far northwest
Heaven stood thick, concentrated in gloom,
Darkness in darkness hidden; for the cloud
Rose firmament on sullen firmament,
As if all brightness to entomb. Across
Great thundrous whispers rolled, and lightning quivered
From edge to edge, a savage pallor. Down
The south wind dropped appalled. Then for a while
Stood pregnant with the thunderbolt and wearing
Rain like a colour, the monumental cloud
Sublime and voiceless. Long the heart was stilled
And the ear waited listening. Suddenly
From motionless battalions as outride
A speed disperse of horsemen, from that mass
Of livid menace went a frail light cloud
Rushing through heaven, and behind it streamed
The downpour all in wet and greenish lines.
Swift rushed the splendid anarchy admired,
And reached, and broke, and with a roar of rain
And tumult on the wings of wind and clasp
Of the o'erwhelmed horizons and with bursts
Of thunder breaking all the body with sound
And lightning 'twixt the eyes intolerable,
Like heaven's vast eagle all that blackness swept
Down over the inferior snowless heights
And swallowed up the dawn. Pururavus,
Lost in the streaming tumult, stood amazed:
But as he watched, he was aware of locks
Flying and a wild face and terrible
And fierce familiar eyes. Again he looked
And knew him in a hundred battles crossed,
The giant Cayshie. It seemed but yesterday
That over the waves of fight their angry eyes
Had met. He in the dim disguise of rain,
All swift with storm, came passionate and huge,
Filling the regions with himself. Immense
He stooped upon the brides of heaven. They
Like flowers in a gust scattered and blown
Fled every way; but he upon that beauty
Magical sprang and seized and lifted up,
As the storm lifts a lily, and arrow-like
Up towards the snow-bound heights in rising cloud
Rushed with the goddess to the trembling East.
But with more formidable speed and fast
Storming through heaven King Pururavus
Hurled after him. The giant turned and knew
The sound of those victorious wheels and light
In a man’s face more dangerous to evil
Than all the shining Gods. He stood, he raised
One dreadful arm that stretched across the heavens,
And shook his baffling lance on high. But vast,
But magnified by speed came threatening on
With echoing hooves and battle in its wheels
The chariot of the King Pururavus
Bearing a formidable charioteer,
Pururavus. The fiend paused, he rolled his eyes
Full of defiance, passion and despair
Upon the swooning goddess in his arms
And that avenger. Violence and fear
Poised him a moment on a wave of fate
This way to death cadent, that way to shame.
Then groaning in his great tumultuous breast
He dropped upon the snow heaven’s ravished flower
And fled, a blackness in the East. New sky
Replenished from the sullen cloud dawned out;
The great pure azure rose in sunlight wide.
Nor King Pururavus pursued but checked
His rushing chariot on the quiet snow
And sprang towards her and knelt down and trembled.
Perfect she lay amid her tresses wide,
Like a mishandled lily luminous,
As she had fallen. From the lucid robe
One shoulder gleamed and golden breast left bare,
Divinely lifting, one gold arm was flung,
A warm rich splendour exquisitely outlined
Against the dazzling whiteness, and her face
Was as a fallen moon among the snows.
And King Pururavus, beholding, glowed
Through all his limbs and maddened with a love
He feared and cherished. Overawed and hushed,  
Hardly even breathing, long he knelt, a greatness  
Made stone with sudden dread and passion. Love  
With fiery attempt plucked him all down to her,  
But fear forbade his lips the perfect curls.  
At length he raised her still un Kissed and laid  
In his bright chariot, next himself ascended  
And resting on one arm with fearful joy  
Her drooping head, with the other ruled the car; —  
With one arm ruled, but his eyes were for her  
Studying her fallen lids and to heart-beats  
Guessing the sweetness of the soul concealed.  
And soon she moved. Those wonderful wide orbs  
Dawned into his, quietly, as if in muse.  
A lovely slow surprise crept into them  
Afterwards; last, something far lovelier,  
Which was herself, and was delight, and love.  
As when a child falls asleep unawares  
At a closed window on a stormy day,  
Looking into the weary rain, and long  
Sleeps, and wakes quietly into a life  
Of ancient moonlight, first the thoughtfulness  
Of that felicitous world to which the soul  
Is visitor in sleep, keeps her sublime  
Discurtained eyes; human dismay comes next,  
Slowly; last, sudden, they brighten and grow wide  
With recognition of an altered world,  
Delighted: so woke Urvasie to love.

But, hardly now that luminous inner dawn  
Bridged joy between their eyes, laughter broke in  
And the returning world; for Ménaca,  
Standing a lily in the snows, laughed back  
Those irresistible wheels and spoke like song; —  
She tremulous and glad from bygone fear;  
But all those flowerlike came, increasing light,  
Their bosoms quick and panting, bright, like waves
That under sunshine lift remembering storm.
And before all Ménaca tremulously
Smiling: “Whither, O King Pururavus,
Bear'st thou thy victory? Wilt thou set her
A golden triumph in thy halls? But she
Is other than thy marble caryatids
And austere doors, purity colourless.
Read not too much thy glory in her eyes.
Will not that hueless inner stream yet serve
Where thou wast wont to know thy perfect deeds?
But give her back, give us our sister back,
And in return take all thyself with thee.”
So with flushed cheeks and smiling Ménaca.
And great Pururavus set down the nymph
In her bright sister's arms and stood awhile
Stormily calm in vast incertitude,
Quivering. Then divine Tilôttama:
“O King, O mortal mightier than the Gods!
For Gods change not their strength, but are of old
And as of old, and man, though less than these,
May yet proceed to greater, self-evolved.
Man, by experience of passion purged,
His myriad faculty perfecting, widens
His nature as it rises till it grows
With God conterminous. For one who tames
His hot tremulousness of soul unblest
And feels around him like an atmosphere
A quiet perfectness of joy and peace,
He, like the sunflower sole of all the year,
Images the divine to which he tends:
So thou, sole among men. And thou today
Hast a high deed perfected, saved from death
The great Gods of the solar world the first,
And saved with them the stars; but her today
Without whom all that world would grow to shade
Or grow to fire, but each way cease to live.
And thou shalt gather strange rewards, O King,
Urvasie

Hurting thyself with good, and lose thy life
To have the life of all the solar world,
Draw infinite gain out of more infinite loss,
And, for the lowest, endless fame. Today
Retire nor pluck the slowly-ripening fates;
Since who anticipates the patient Gods,
Finds his crown ashes and his empire grief.
So choose blind Titans in their violent souls
Unseeing, forfeiting the beautiful world
For momentary splendours.” She was silent,
And he replied no word, but gathering
His reins swept from the golden group. His car
Through those mute Himalayan doors of earth
And all that silent life before our life
Solitary and great and merciless,
Went groaning down the wind. He, the sole living,
Over the dead deep-plunging precipices
Passed bright and small in a wide dazzling world
Illimitable, where eye flags and ear
Listening feels inhuman loneliness.
He tended towards Gungotri’s solemn peaks
And savage glaciers and the caverns pure
Whence Ganges leaps, our mother, virgin-cold.
But ere he plunged into the human vales
And kindlier grandeurs, King Pururavus
Looked back upon a gust of his great heart,
And saw her. On a separate peak, divine,
In blowing raiment and a glory of hair
She stood and watched him go with serious eyes
And a soft wonder in them and a light.
One hand was in her streaming folds, one shaded
Her eyes as if the vision that she saw
Were brighter even than deathless eyes endure.
Over her shoulder pressed a laughing crowd
Of luminous faces. And Pururavus
Staggered as smitten, and shaking wide his reins
Rushed like a star into the infinite air;
So curving downwards on precipitate wheels,
His spirit all a storm, came with the wind
Far-sounding into Ila’s peaceful town.
CANTO II

But from the dawn and mountains Urvasie
Went marvelling and glad, not as of old
A careless beam; for an august constraint,
Unfelt before, ruled her extravagant grace
And wayward beauty; and familiar things
Grew strange to her, and to her eyes came mists
Of mortal vision. Love was with her there,
But not of Paradise nor that great guest
Perpetual who makes his golden couch
Between the Opsara’s ever-heaving breasts.
For this was rapturous, troubled, self-absorbed,
A gracious human presence which she loved,
And wondered at, and hid deep in her heart.
And whether in the immortal’s dance she moved,
A billow, or her fingers like sunbeams
Brightened the harps of heaven, or going out
With the white dawn to bathe in Swerga’s streams,
Or in the woods of Eden wandering,
Or happy sitting under peaceful boughs
In a great golden evening, all she did,
Celestial occupations, all she thought
And all she was, though still the same, had changed.
There was a happy trouble in her ways
And movements; her felicitous lashes drooped
As with a burden; all her daily acts
Were like a statue’s imitating life,
Not single-hearted like the sovran Gods.
Now as the days of heaven went by in quiet
And there was peaceful summer ’mid the Gods,
In Swarga song increased and dances swayed
In multitudinous beauty, jasmine-crowned;
And often in high Indra’s hall the spirits
Immortal met to watch the shows divine
Of action and celestial theatre.
For not of earth alone are delicate arts
And noble imitations, but in heaven
Have their rich prototypes. So on that day
Before a divine audience there was staged
The Choice of Luxmie. Urvasie enacted
The goddess, Ocean’s child, and Ménaca
Was Varunie, and other girls of heaven
Assembled the august desiring Gods.
Full strangely sweet those delicate mimics were;
Moonbeam faces imitated the strength
And silence of great spirits battle-worn,
And little hands the awful muniments
Of empire grasped and powers that shake the world.
Then with a golden wave of arm sublime
Ménaca towards the warlike consistory,
Under half-drooping lashes indicating
Where calm eternal Vishnu like a cloud
Sat discus-armed, said to her sister bright:
“Daughter of Ocean, sister, for whom heaven
Is passionate, thou hast reviewed the powers
Eternal and their dreadful beauty scanned,
And heard their blissful names. Say, unafraid
Before these listening faces, whom thou lovest
Above all Gods and more than earth and more
Than joy of Swerga’s streams?” And Urvasie,
Musing with wide unseeing eyes, replied
In a far voice: “The King Pururavus.”
Then, as a wind among the leaves, there swept
A gust of laughter through the assembled Gods,
A happy summer sound. But not in mirth
Bharuth, the mighty dramatist of heaven,
Passionate to see his smooth work marred and spell
Broken of scenic fancies finely-touched:
“Since thou hast brought the breath of mortal air
Into the pure solemnities of heaven,
And since thou givest up to other ends
Than the one need for which God made thee form,
Urvasie

Thy being and hast here transferred from earth
Human failure from the divided soul,
Marring my great creation, Urvasie,
I curse thee to possess thy heart’s desire.
Exiled from Swerga’s streams and golden groves
Thou, by terrestrial Ganges or on sad
Majestic mountains or in troubled towns,
Enjoy thy love, but hope not here to breathe
Felicity in regions built for peace
Of who, erect in their own nature, keep
Living by fated toils the glorious world.”
He ceased and there was silence of the Gods.
Then Indra answered, smiling, though ill-pleased:
“Bharuth, not well nor by the fates allowed
To exile without limit from the skies
Who of the skies is part. Her wilt thou banish
From the felicity of grove and stream,
Making our Eden empty of her smiles?
But what felicity in stream or grove
And she not secret there? And hast thou taxed
Her passion, yet in passion wouldst deface
The beautiful world because thy work is vain?”
Bharuth replied, the high poet severe:
“Irrevocable is the doom pronounced
Once by my lips. Fates too are born of song.
But if of limit thou speakest and the term
By nature fixed to the divorce of her
From the felicity in which she moves,
Nature that fixed the limit, still effects
Inevitably its fated ends. For Fate,
The dim great presence, is but nature made
Irrevocable in its fruits. Let her
To the pure banks of sacred Ganges wend.
There she may keep her exile, from of old
Intended for perfection of the earth
Through her sweet change. Heaven too shall flash and grow
Fairer with her returning feet though changed, —
Though changed, yet lovelier from beneficence.
For she will come soft with maternal cheeks
And flushed from nuptial arms and human-blest
With touches of the warm delightful earth."
He said and Urvasie from the dumb place
And thoughtful presence of the Gods departed
Into the breezy noon of Swerga. Under
Green well-known boughs laden with nameless fruit
And over blissful swards and perfect flowers
And through the wandering alleys she arrived
To heavenly Ganges where it streams o’er stones;
There from the banks of summer downward stepped,
One little golden hand gathering her dress
Above her naked knees, and, lovely, passed
Through the divine pellucid river on
To Swerga’s portals, pausing on the slope
Which goes toward the world. There she looked down
With yearning eyes far into endless space.
Behind her stood the green felicitous peaks
And trembling tops of woods and pulse of blue
With those calm cloudless summits quivering.
All heaven was behind her, but she sent
No look to those eternal seats of joy.
She down the sunbeams gazed where mountains rose
In snow, the bleak and mighty hills of earth,
And virgin forests vast, great infant streams
And cities young in the heroic dawn
Of history and insurgent human art
Titanic on the old stupendous hills,
Towards these she gazed down under eyelids glad.
And to her gazing came Tilottama,
Bright out of heaven, and clasped her quiet hand
And murmured softly, “Sister, let us go.”
Then they went down into the waiting world,
The golden women, and through gorges mute
Past Budricayshwur in the silent snow
Came silent to Pururavus Urvasie.
For not in Ilian streets Pururavus
Sojourned, nor in the happy throng of men,
But with the infinite and the lonely hills.
For he grew weary of walls and luminous carved
Imperial pillars bearing up huge weight
Of architectural stone, and the long street,
And thoughtful temple wide, and sharp cymbals
Protecting the august pure place with sound;
The battled tramp of men, sessions of kings,
The lightning from sharp weapons, jubilant crash
Of chariots, and the Veda’s mighty chant;
The bright booths of the merchants, the loud looms
And the smith’s hammer clanging music out,
And stalwart men driving the patient plow
Indomitable in fierce breath of noon.
Of these he now grew weary and the blaze
Of kingship, its immense and iron toils,
With one hand shielding in the people’s ease,
With one hand smiting back the tireless foe,
And difficulty of equal justice cold,
And kind beneficent works harmonious kept
With terrible control; the father’s face,
The man’s heart, the steeled intellect of power
Insolubly one; and after sleepless nights
Labouring greatly for a great reward,
Frequent failure and vigorous success,
And sweet reward of voices filial grown.
These that were once his life, he loved no more.
They held not his desire nor were alive,
But pale magnificent ghosts out of the past
With sad obsession closing him from warm
Life and the future in far sunlight gold.
For in his heart and in his musing eyes
There was a light on the cold snows, a blush
Upon the virgin quiet of the East
And storm and slowly-lifting lids. Therefore
He left the city Ilian and plains
Whence with a mighty motion eastward flows
Ganges, heroical and young, a swift
Mother of strenuous nations, nor yet reaches
Her musing age in ardent deep Bengal.
He journeyed to the cold north and the hills
Austere, past Budricayshwur ever north,
Till, in the sixth month of his pilgrimage
Uneasy, to a silent place he came
Within a heaped enormous region piled
With prone far-drifting hills, huge peaks o'erwhelmed
Under the vast illimitable snows, —
Snow on ravine, and snow on cliff, and snow
Sweeping in strenuous outlines to heaven,
With distant gleaning vales and turbulent rocks,
Giant precipices black-hewn and bold
Daring the universal whiteness; last,
A mystic gorge into some secret world.

He in that region waste and wonderful
Sojourned, and morning-star and evening-star
Shone over him and faded, and immense
Darkness wrapped the hushed mountain solitudes
And moonlight's brilliant muse and the cold stars
And day upon the summits brightening.
But ere day grew the hero nympholept
Climbed the immortal summits towards the dawn
And came with falling evening down and lay
Watching the marvellous sky, but called not sleep
That beat her gentle wings over his eyes,
Nor food he needed who was grown a god.
And in the seventh month of his waiting long
Summit or cliff he climbed no more, but added
To the surrounding hush sat motionless,
Gazing towards the dim unfathomed gorge.
Six days he sat and on the seventh they came
Through the dumb gorge, a breath of heaven, a stir,
Then Eden's girls stepping with moonbeam feet
Over the barren rocks and dazzling snows,
That grew less dazzling, their tresses half unbound
And delicate raiment girdled enchantingly.
Silent the perfect presences of heaven
Came towards him and stood a little away,
Like flowers waiting for a sunbeam. He
Stirred not, but without voice, in vision merged,
Sat, as one sleeping momentarily expects
The end of a dear dream he sees, and knows
It is a dream, and quietly resigned
Waits for the fragile bliss to break or fade.
Then nearer drew divine Tilottama
And stood before his silence statuesque,
Holding her sister's hand; for she hung back,
Not as an earthly maiden, cheeks suffused,
Lids drooping, but as men from patience called
Before supreme felicity hang back,
A little awed, a little doubtful, fearing
To enter radiant Paradise, so bright
It seems; thus she and quailed before her bliss.
But her sister, extending one bright arm:
"Pururavus, thou hast conquered and I bring
No dream into thy life, but Urvasie."
And at that name the strong Pururavus
Rose swaying to his feet like one struck blind;
Or when a great thought flashes through his brain,
A poet starts up and almost cries aloud
As at a voice,—so he arose and heard.
And slowly said divine Tilottama:
"Yet, son of Ila, one is man and other
The Opsaras of heaven, daughters of the sea,
Unlimited in being, Ocean-like.
They not to one lord yield nor in one face
Limit the universe, but like sweet air,
Water unowned and beautiful common light
In unrestrained surrender remain pure.
In patient paths of Nature upon earth
And over all the toiling stars we fill
With sacred passion large high-venturing spirits
And visit them with bliss; so are they moved
To immense creative anguish, glad if through
Heart-breaking toil once in bare seasons dawn
Our golden breasts between their hands or rush
Our passionate presence on them like a wave.
In heaven bright-limbed with bodily embrace
We clasp the Gods, and clasp the souls of men,
And know with winds and flowers liberty.
But what hast thou with us or winds or flowers?
O thou who wast so white, wilt thou not keep
Thy pure and lonely eminence and move
For ever towards morning like a star?
Or as thy earthly Ganges rolling down
Between the homes and passionate deeds of men,
And bearing many boats and white with oars,
From all that life quite separate, only lives
Towards Ocean, so thou dost human work,
Making a mighty nation, doing high
And necessary deeds, but, all untouched
By action, livest in thy soul apart
And to the immortal zenith climbest pure.”
But he, blind as from dazzling dreams, said low:
“One I thought spoke far-off of purity
And whiteness and the human soul in God.
These things were with me once, but now I see
The Spring a golden child and shaken fields.
All beautiful things draw near and come to me.
I dream upon a woman’s glorious breasts,
And watch the dew-drop and am glad with birds,
And love the perfect coilings of the snake,
And cry with fire in the burning trees,
And am a wave towards desired shores.
I move to these and move towards her bosom
And mystic eyes where all these are one dream.
And what shall God profit me or his glory,
Who love one small face more than all his worlds?"

He woke with his own voice. His words that first
Dreamed like a languid wave, sudden were foam;
And he beheld her standing and his look
Grew strong; he yearned towards her like a wave,
And she received him in her eyes as earth
Receives the rain. Then bright Tilottama
Cried in a shining glory over them:
“O happy lover and O fortunate loved,
Who make love heavenlier by loss! Ah yet,
The Gods give no irrecoverable gifts,
Nor unconditioned, O Pururavus,
Is highest bliss even to most favoured men.
And thy deep joy must tremble o’er her with soul
On guard, all overshadowed by a fear.
For one year thou shalt know her on the peaks,
In solitary vastnesses of hills
And regions snow-besieged; and for one year
In the green forests populous and free
Life in sunlight and by delightful streams
Thou shalt enjoy her; and for one year where
The busy tramp of men goes ceaseless by,
Subduing her to lovely human cares:
And so long after as one law observed
Save her to thee, O King; for never man
With Opsara may dwell and both be known:
Either a rapture she invisible
Or he a mystic body and mystic soul.
Reveal not then thy being naked to hers,
O virgin Ila’s son, nor suffer ever
Light round thy body naked to her eyes,
Lest day dawn not on thy felicity,
Sole among men.” She left them, shining up
Into the sunlight, and was lost in noon.
And King Pururavus stood for a space,
Like the entrancèd calm before great winds
And thunder. Then through all his limbs there flashed
Youth and the beauty and the warmth of earth
And joy of her left lonely to his will.
He moved, he came towards her. She, a leaf
Before a gust among the nearing trees,
Cowered. But, all a sea of mighty joy
Rushing and swallowing up the golden sand,
With a great cry and glad Pururavus
Seized her and caught her to his bosom thrilled,
Clinging and shuddering. All her wonderful hair
Loosened and the wind seized and bore it streaming
Over the shoulder of Pururavus
And on his cheek a softness. She, o’erborne,
Panting, with inarticulate murmurs lay,
Like a slim tree half seen through driving hail,
Her naked arms clasping his neck, her cheek
And golden throat averted, and wide trouble
In her large eyes bewildered with their bliss.
Amid her wind-blown hair their faces met.
With her sweet limbs all his, feeling her breasts
Tumultuous up against his beating heart,
He kissed the glorious mouth of heaven’s desire.
So clung they as two shipwrecked in a surge.
Then strong Pururavus, with godlike eyes
Mastering hers, cried tremulous: “O beloved,
O miser of thy rich and happy voice,
One word, one word to tell me that thou lovest.”
And Urvasie, all broken on his bosom,
Her godhead in his passion lost, moaned out
From her imprisoned breasts, “My lord, my love!”
CANTO III

So was a goddess won to mortal arms;
And for twelve months he held her on the peaks,
In solitary vastnesses of hills
And regions snow-besieged. There in dim gorge
And tenebrous ravine and on wide snows
Clothed with deserted space, o’er precipices
With the far eagles wheeling under them,
Or where large glaciers watch, or under cliffs
O’er-murmured by the streaming waterfalls,
And later in the pleasant lower hills,
He of her beauty world-desired took joy:
And all earth’s silent sublime spaces passed
Into his blood and grew a part of thought.
Twelve months in the green forests populous,
Life in sunlight and by delightful streams
He increased rapture. The green tremulous groves,
And solitary rivers white with birds,
And watered hollow’s gleam, and sunny boughs
Gorgeous with peacocks or illumining
Bright bosom of doves, in forests’ musing day
Or the great night with roar of many beasts,—
All these were Eden round the glorious pair.
And in their third flower-haunted spring of love
A child was born from golden Urvasie.
But when the goddess from maternal pangs
Woke to the child’s sweet face and strange tumult
Of new delight and felt the little hands
Erring about her breasts, passionate she cried:
“How long shall we in woods, Pururavus,
Waste the glad days of cheerful human life?
What pleasure is in soulless woods and waves?
But I would go into the homes of men,
Hear the great sound of cities, watch the eager
Faces tending to hall and mart, and talk
With the bright girls of earth, and kiss the eyes
Of little children, feel smooth floors of stone
Under my feet and the restraint of walls,
And eat earth's food from vessels made and drink
Earth's water cool from jars, and know all joy
And labour of that blithe and busy world.”
She said, and he with a slight happy smile
Consented. So to sacred Ganges they
Came and the virgin's city Ilia.
But when they neared the mighty destined walls,
His virgin-mother from her temple pure
Saw him, and a wild blare of conchs arose.
Rejoicing to the lion-gates they streamed,
The people of Pururavus, a glad
Throng indistinguishable, traders and priests,
Merchants of many gains and craftsmen fine
Oblivious of their daily toils; the carver
Flinging his tool away and hammerless
The giant smith laughing through his vast beard.
And little children ran, all over flowers,
And girls like dawn with a delightful noise
Of anklets, matrons and old men divine,
And half a godhead with great glances came
The large-eyed poets of the Vedic chant;
Before them, all that multitude divided
Honouring them. In gleaming armour came,
And bearing dreadful bows, with sound of swords,
High lords of sacrifice and aged chiefs
War-weary and great heroes with mighty tread.
All these to a high noise of trumpets came.
They with a wide sound going up to heaven
Welcomed their king, and a soft shower of blooms
Fell on him as from warlike fields returned.
Much all they marvelled at his heavenly bride
And worshipped her, half-awed. And young girls came,
Daughters of warriors, to great houses wed,
Sweet faces of delightful laughter, came
And took into their glad embrace and kissed,
Enamoured of her smiling mouth, and praised
Aloud her beauty. With flowers then they bound
Her soft immortal wrists, and through the gates,
Labouring in vain to bend great bows, waving
Far-glancing steel, and up the bridal streets
Captive the girlish phalanx, bright with swords,
After the old heroic fashion led.
They amid trumpets and the vast acclaim
Of a glad people brought the child of Gods
To her terrestrial home; through the strong doors
They lifted, and upon an earthly floor,
Loosening, let from the gleaming limbs slide down
Her heavenly vesture; next they brought and flung
About her sweet insufferable grace
Mortal habiliments, a clinging robe.
Over her hair the wifely veil was drawn.
Thus was the love of all the world confined
To one man’s home. And O too fortunate
Mortal, who could with those auguster joys
Mingle our little happy human pains,
Subduing a fair goddess from her skies
To gentle ordinary things, sweet service
And household tasks making her beautiful,
And trivial daily words, and kisses kind,
And all the meaning dear of wife and home!
Human with earth dwelt golden Urvasie,
And bore to King Pururavus a race
Of glorious children, each a shining god.
She loved that great and simple life of old,
Its marble outlines, strong joys and clear air
Around the soul, loved and made roseate.
The sacred city felt a finer life
Within it; burning inspirations breathed
From hallowed poets; and architects to grace
And fancy their immense conceptions toned;
Numberless heroes emulously drove forth
And in strong joyous battle rolling back
The dark barbarian borders, flashed through fields,
Brilliant, and sages in their souls saw God.
And from the city of Pururavus
High influences went; Indus and Ganges
And all the golden intermediate lands
Grew with them and a perfect impulse felt.
Seven years the earth rejoiced in Urvasie.

But in their fortunate heavens the high Gods
Dwelt infelicitous, losing the old
Rapture inexplicable and thrill beneath
Their ancient calm. Therefore not long enduring,
They in colossal council marble, said
To that bright sister whom she had loved best,
“Ménaca!” crying “how long shall one man
Divide from heaven its most perfect bliss?
Go down and bring her back, our bright one back,
And we shall love again our luminous halls.”
She heard and went, with her ethereal robe
Murmuring about her, to the gates divine,
And looked into the world, and saw the far
Titanic Ilian city like a stone
Sunlit upon the small and distant earth.
Down from heaven’s peaks the daughter of the sea
Went flashing and upon a breathless eve
Came to the city of Pururavus,
Air blazing far behind her till she paused.
She over the palace of Pururavus
Stood in shadow. Within the lights yet were;
Still sat the princes and young poets sang
On harps heroical of Urvasie
And strong Pururavus, of Urvasie
The light and lovely spirit golden-limbed,
Son of a virgin strong Pururavus.
“O earth made heaven to Pururavus!
O heaven left earth without sweet Urvasie!
“Rejoice possessing, O Pururavus!
Be glad who art possessed, O Urvasie!
“Behold the parents of the sacrifice!
When they have met, then they together rush
And in their arms the beautiful fire is born.
“Behold the children of the earth and sky!
When they met, then they loved, O then they clasped,
And from their clasp a lovely presence grew.
“A holy virgin’s son we hear of thee
Without a father born, Pururavus,
Without a mother lovely Urvasie.
“Hast thou not brought the sacrifice from heaven,
The unquenched, unkindled fire, Pururavus?
Hast thou not brought delightful Urvasie?
“The fires of sacrifice mount ever up:
To their lost heavens they naturally aspire.
Their tops are weighted with a human prayer.
“The soul of love mounts also towards the sky;
Thence came the spark but hardly shall return;
Its wings are weighted with too fierce a fire.
“Rejoice in the warm earth, O lovely pair,
The green strong earth that gave Pururavus.
“Rejoice in the blithe earth, O lovely pair,
The happy earth all flushed with Urvasie.
“As lightning takes the heart with pleasant dread,
So love is of the strong Pururavus.
“As breathes sweet fragrance from the flower oppressed,
So love from thy bruised bosom, Urvasie.”

So sang they and the heart rejoiced. Then rose
The princes and went down the long white street,
Each to his home. Soon every sound had faded;
Heaven and a few bright stars possessed the world.
But in a silent place dim with the west
On that last night of the sweet passionate earth,
The goddess with the mortal hero lay.
For over them victorious Love still showered
His arrows marble-dinting, not flower-tipped
As our brief fading fires, — naked and large
As heaven the monumental loves of old.
On their rich bed they lay, and the two rams
That once the subtle bright Gundhurvas gave
To Urvasie, were near; they were ever
With her and cherished; hardly even she loved
The tender faces of her children more
Than these choice from flocks heavenly: only these
Remained to her of unforgotten skies.
So lay they under those fierce shafts of Love,
And in the arms of strong Pururavus
Once more were those beloved limbs embraced,
Once more, if never once again on earth.
Before he slept, the lord of Urvasie
Clasped her to him and wooed from her tired lips
One kiss, nor in its passion felt farewell.
But the night darkened over the vague town,
And clouds came gradual up, and through the clouds
In thunderless great flashes stealing came
The subtle-souled Gundhurvas from the peaks
Of distant Paradise. Thunder rolled out,
And through the walls, in a fierce rush of light,
Entered the thieves of heaven and stole the rams,
And fled with the same lightning. Shuddering
The exile of the skies awoke and knew
Her loss, and with a lamentable cry
Turned to her lord. “Arise, Pururavus!”
She wept, “they take from me my snow-white joys.”
And starting from his sleep Pururavus,
In that waking when memory is far
And nature of a man unquestioned rules,
Heard of oppression and a space forgot
Fate and his weak tenure of mighty bliss,
Restored to the great nature of a king.
Wrathful he leaped up and on one swift stride
Reached to his bow. Before ’twas grasped he shuddered,
His soul all smitten with a rushing fear.
Urvasie

Alarmed he turned towards her. Suddenly wide
The whole room stood in splendour manifest,
All lightning, and heroically vast,
In gesture kingly like a statue stayed,
Rose glorious, all a grace of naked limbs,
The hero beautiful, Pururavus,
In that fierce light. Intenser than by day
He for one brilliant moment clear beheld
All the familiar place, the fretted huge
Images on the columns, the high-reared
Walls massively erect and silent floor,
And on the floor the gracious fallen dress
That never should embrace her perfect form,
Lying a glimmer, and each noble curve
Of the strong couch, and delicately distinct
The golden body and the flower-like face:
Beside her with a lovely smile that other,
One small hand pressing back the shining curls
Blown with her speed over her. Then all faded.
Thunder crashed through the heavens jubilant.
For a long while he stood with beating heart
Half-conscious of its loss, and as if waiting
Another flash, into the dimness gazed
For those loved outlines that were far away.
Then with a quiet smile he went and placed
Where she had lain such a short while ago
Both hands, expecting her sweet breasts, but found
Her place all empty to him. Silently
He lay down whispering to his own heart:
“She has arisen and her shining dress
Put round her and gone into the cool alcove
To fetch sweet water for the heavenly rams,
And she will stay awhile perhaps to look
And muse upon the night, and then come back,
And give them drink, and silently lie down
Beside me. I shall see her when it dawns.”
And so he slept. But the grey dawn came in
And raised his lashes. He stretched out his arms
To find her. Then he knew he was alone.

Even so he would not dwell with his despair.
“She is but gone,” he said, “for a little gone
Into the infinite silences afar
To see her golden sisters and revisit
The streams she knew and those unearthly skies.
But she will soon come back, — even if her heart
Would let her linger, mine would draw her back; —
Come soon and talk to me of all she left,
And clasp her children, and resume sweet goings
And happy daily tasks and rooms she loved.”
So, steadfast, he continued kingly toils
Among a people greatly-destined, giving
In sacred sessions and assemblies calm
Counsels far-seeing, magnanimous decrees
Bronze against Time, and from the judgment seat
Unblamed sentence or reconcilement large.
And perfect trinity of holy fires
He kindled for desirable rain, and went
To concourse of strong men or pleasant crowds,
Or triumphed in great games armipotent.
Yet behind all his moments there was void.
And as when one puts from him desperately
The thought of an inevitable fate,
Blinding himself with present pleasures, often
At a slight sound, a knocking at the door,
A chance word terrible, or even uncalled
His heart grows sick with sudden fear, and ghastly
The face of that dread future through the window
Looks at him; mute he sits then shuddering:
So to Pururavus in session holy,
Or warlike concourse, or alone, speaking,
Or sitting, often a swift dreadful fear
Made his life naked like a lightning flash;
Then his whole being shook and his strong frame,
As with a fever, and his eyes gazed blind;
Soon with great breaths he repossessed his soul.
Long he endured thus, but when shocks of fear
And brilliant passage of remorseless suns
And wakeful nights wrestling with memory
Invisibly had worn his heart, he then
Going as one desperate, void of thought or aim,
Into that silent place dim with the west,
Saw there her dress empty of her, and bed
Forlorn, and the cold floor where she had lain
At noon and made life sweet to him with her voice.
Sometimes as in an upland reservoir
Built by the hands of early Aryan kings,
Its banks in secret fretted long go down,
Suddenly down with resonant collapse,
Then with a formidable sound the flood
Descends, heard over all the echoing hills,
And marble cities are o’erwhelmed; so sank
The courage of the strong Pururavus,
By memory and anguish overcome
And thoughts of bliss intolerable. Tears
Came from him; the unvanquished hero lay
With outstretched arms and wept. Henceforth his life
Was with that room. If he appeared in high
Session, warlike concourse or pleasant crowd,
Men looked on him as on the silent dead.
Nor did he linger, but from little stay
Would silently return and in hushed rooms
Watch with the little relics left of her,
Things he had hardly borne to see before,
Now clasped them often, often kissed, sometimes
Spoke to them as to sweet and living friends,
And often over his sleeping children hung.
Nor did he count the days, nor weep again,
But looked into the dawn with tearless eyes.
And all the people mourned for their great king,
Silently watching him, and many murmured:
“This is not he, the King Pururavus,
Hero august, who his impetuous soul
Ruled like a calm and skilful charioteer,
And was the virgin Ila’s son, our king.
Would that the enemy’s war-cry now might rush
Against our gates and all the air be sound.
Surely he would arise and lift his bow,
And his swift chariot hurling through the gates
Advance upon them like a sea, and triumph,
And be himself among the rushing wheels.”
So they would murmur grieving. But the king
When the bright months brought round a lustier earth,
Felt over his numbed soul some touch of flowers,
And rose a little from his grief, and lifted
His eyes against the stars. Then he said low:
“I was not wont so quickly to despair.
O hast thou left me and art lost in light,
Cruel, between the shining hemispheres?
Yet even there I will pursue my joy.
Though all the great immortals jealously
Encompass round with shields thy golden limbs,
I may clash through them yet, or my strong patience
Will pluck my love down from her distant stars.
Still am I Ila’s son, Pururavus,
That passionless pure strength though lost, though fallen
From the armed splendid soul which once I was."
So saying he to the hall of session strode,
Mightily like a king, a marble place
With wide Titanic arches imminent,
And from the brooding pillars seized a shell
And blew upon it. Like a storm the sound
Through Pratisthana’s streets was blown. Forth came
From lintel proud and happy threshold low
The people pouring out. Majestic chiefs
And strong war-leaders and old famous men
And mighty poets first; behind them streamed
The Ilian people like driving rain, and filled
With faces the immeasurable hall.
And over them the beautiful great king
Rose bright; anticipations wonderful
Of immortality flashed through his eyes
And round his brow’s august circumference.
“My people whom I made, I go from you;
And what shall I say to you, Ilian people,
Who know my glory and know my grief? Now I
Endure no more the desolate wide rooms
And gardens empty of her. I will depart
And find her under imperishable trees
Or secret beside streams. But since I go
And leave my work behind and a young nation
With destiny like an uncertain dawn
Over it — Ayus her son, I give you. He
By beauty and strength incomparable shall rule.
Lo, I have planted earth with deeds and made
The widest heavens my monument, have brought
From Paradise the sempiternal fire
And warred in heaven among the warring Gods.
O people, you have shared my famous actions
Done in a few great years of earthly life,
The battles I fought, edifications vast,
And perfect institutes that I have framed.
High things we have done together, O my people.
But now I go to claim back from the Gods
Her they have taken from me, my dear reward.”
He spoke and all the nation listened, dumb.
Then was brought forth the bud of Urvasie,
With Vedic verse intoned and Ganges pure
Was crowned a king, and empire on his curls
Established. But Pururavus went forth,
Through ranks of silent people and gleaming arms,
With the last cloud of sunset up the fields
And darkening meadows. And from Ila’s rock,
And from the temple of Ila virginal,
A rushing splendour wonderfully arose
And shone all round the great departing king.
He in that light turned and saw under him
The mighty city, luminous and vast,
Colossally up-piled towards the heavens,
Temple and street and palace, and the sea
Of sorrowing faces and sad grieving eyes;
A moment saw, and disappeared from light
Into forest. Then a loud wail arose
From Pratisthana, as if barbarous hordes
Were in the streets and all its temples huge
Rising towards heaven in disastrous fire,
But he unlistening into darkness went.
Through darkness and immense dim night he went
Mid phantom outlines of approaching trees,
And all the day in green leaves, till he came
To peopled forests and sweet clamorous streams
And marvellous shining meadows where he lived
With Urvasie his love in seasons old.
These like domestic faces waiting were.
He knew each wind-blown tree, each different field;
And could distinguish all the sounding rivers
Each by its own voice and peculiar flow.
Here were the happy shades where they had lain
Inarmed and murmuring, here half-lustrous groves
Still voiceful with a sacred sound at noon,
And these the rivers from her beauty bright.
There straying in field and forest he to each
Familiar spot so full of her would speak,
Pausing by banks and memorable trees.
“O sacred fig-tree, under thee she paused
Musing amid her tresses, and her eyes
Were sweet and grave. And, O delicious shade,
Thou hast experienced brightness from her feet,
O cool and dark green shelterer, perfect place!
And lo! the boughs all ruinous towards earth
With blossoms. Here she lay, her arms thrown back,
Smiling up to me, and the flowers rained
Upon her lips and eyes and bosom bare.
And here a secret opening where she stood
Waiting in narrow twilight; round her all
Was green and secret with a mystic, dewy
Half invitation into emerald worlds.
O river, from thee she moved towards the glade
Breathing and wet and fresh as if a flower
All bare from rain. And thou, great holy glade,
Sawest her face maternal o’er her child.”
Then ceasing he would wait and listen, half
Expecting her. But all was silent; only
Perhaps a bird darted bright-winged away,
Or a grey snake slipped through the brilliant leaves.
Thus wandering, thus in every mindful place
Renewing old forgotten scenes that rose,
Gleam after gleam, upon his mind, as stars
Return at night; thus drawing from his heart
Where they lay covered, old sweet incidents
To live before his eyes; thus calling back
Uncertain moods, brief moments of her face,
And transient postures strangely beautiful,
Pleasures, and little happy mists of tears
Heart-freeing, he, materializing dreams,
Upon her very body almost seized.
Always a sense of imperfection slipped
Between him and that passionate success.
Therefore he murmured at last unsatisfied:
“She is not here; though every mystic glade
And sunbright pasture breathe alone of her
And quiver as with her presence, I find not
Her very limbs, her very face; yet dreamed
That here infallibly I should restrain
Her fugitive feet or hold her by the robe.
O once she was the luminous soul of these,
And in her body lived the summer and spring
And seed and blossoming, ripening and fall,
Hiding of Beauty in the wood and glen,
And flashing out into the sunlit fields
All flowers and laughter. All the happy moods
And all the beautiful amorous ways of earth
She was; but they now seem only her dress
Left by her. Therefore, O ye seaward rivers,
O forests, since ye have deceived my hope,
I go from you to dazzling cruel ravines
And find her on inclement mountains pure.”

Then northward blown upon a storm of hope
The hero self-discrowned, Pururavus,  
Went swiftly up the burning plains and through  
The portals of the old Saivaalic hills  
To the inferior heights, nor lingered long,  
Though pulsing with fierce memories, though thrilled  
With shocks of a great passion touching earth;  
But plunged o’er difficult gorge and prone ravine  
And rivers thundering between dim walls,  
Driven by immense desire, until he came  
To dreadful silence of the peaks and trod  
Regions as vast and lonely as his love.  
Then with a confident sublime appeal  
He to the listening summits stretched his hands:  
“O desolate strong Himalaya, great  
Thy peaks alone with heaven and dreadful hush  
In which the Soul of all the world is felt  
Meditating creation! Thou, O mountain,  
My bridal chamber wast. On thee we lay  
With summits towards the moon or with near stars  
Watching us in some wild inhuman vale,  
Thy silence over us like a coverlid  
Or a far avalanche for bridal song.  
Lo, she is fled into your silences!  
I come to you, O mountains, with a heart  
Desolate like you, like you snow-swept, and stretch  
Towards your solemn summits kindred hands.  
Give back to me, O mountains, give her back.”  
He ceased and Himalaya bent towards him, white.  
The mountains seemed to recognize a soul  
Immense as they, reaching as they to heaven  
And capable of infinite solitude.  
Long he, in meditation deep immersed,  
Strove to dissolve his soul among the hills  
Into the thought of Urvasie. The snow  
Stole down from heaven and touched his cheek and hair,  
The storm-blast from the peaks leaped down and smote  
But woke him not, and the white drops in vain
Froze in his locks or crusted all his garb.
For he lived only with his passionate heart.
But as the months with slow unnoticed tread
Passed o’er the hills nor brought sweet change of spring
Nor autumn wet with dew, a voice at last
Moved from far heavens, other than our sky.
And he arose as one impelled and came
Past the supreme great ridges northward, came
Into the wonderful land far up the world
Dim-looming, where the Northern Kurus dwell,
The ancients of the world, invisible,
Among forgotten mists. Through mists he moved
Feeling a sense of unseen cities, hearing
No sound, nor seeing face, but conscious ever
Of an immense traditionary life
Throbbing round him and dreams historical.
For as he went, old kingly memories surged,
And with vast forward faces driving came
Origins and stabilities and empires,
Huge passionate creations, impulses
National realizing themselves in stone.
Lastly with rolling of the mists afar
He saw beneath him the primeval rocks
Plunge down into the valley, and upsoar
To light wide thoughtful domes and measureless
Ramparts, and mid them in a glory walk
The ancients of the world with eyes august.
Next towards the sun he looked and saw enthroned
Upon the summit one whose regal hair
Crowned her, and purple in waves down to her feet
Flowed, Indira, the goddess, Ocean’s child,
Giver of empire who all beauty keeps
Between her hands, all glory, all wealth, all power.
Severe and beautiful she leaned her face.
“What passion, Ilian Pururavus,
Has led thee here to my great capital
And ancient men in the forgotten mists,
The fathers of the Aryan race? Of glory
Enamoured hast thou come, or for thy people
Empire soliciting? But other beauty
Is on thy brow and light no longer mine.
Yet not for self wast thou of virgin born,
Perfect, and the aerial paths of gods
Permitted to thy steps; nor for themselves,
But to the voice of Vedic litanies,
Sacredly placed are the dread crowns of Kings
For bright felicities and cruel toils.
And thou, O Ilian Pururavus,
For passion dost thou leave thy strenuous grandeurs,
A nation’s destinies, and hast not feared
The sad inferior Ganges lapsing down
With mournful rumour through the shades of Hell?”
Then with calm eyes the hero Ilian:
“O Goddess, patroness of Aryasthan,
Lover of banyan and of lotus, I
Not from the fear of Hell or hope of Heaven
Do good or ill. Reigning I reigned o’er self,
And with a kingly soul did kingly deeds.
Now driven by a termless wide desire
I wander over snow and countries vague.”
And like a viol Luxmie answered him:
“Sprung of the moon, thy grandsire’s fault in thee
Yet lives; but since thy love is singly great,
Doubtless thou shalt possess thy whole desire.
Yet hast thou maimed the future and discrowned
The Aryan people; for though Ila’s sons,
In Hustina, the city of elephants,
And Indraprutha, future towns, shall rule
Drawing my peoples to one sceptre, at last
Their power by excess of beauty falls, —
Thy sin, Pururavus — of beauty and love:
And this the land divine to impure grasp
Yields of barbarians from the outer shores.”
She ceased and the oblivious mists rolled down.
But the strong hero uncrowned, Pururavus,
Eastward, all dreaming with his great desire,
Wandered as when a man in sleep arises,
And goes into the night, and under stars
Through the black spaces moves, nor knows his feet
Nor where they guide him, but dread unseen power
Walks by him and leads his unerring steps
To some weird forest or gaunt mountain-side;
There he awakes, a horror in his soul,
And shudders alien amid places strange.
So wandered, driven by an unknown power,
Pururavus. Over hushed dreadful hills
And snows more breathless to the quiet banks
Of a wide lake mid rocks and bending woods
He came, and saw calm mountains over it,
And knew in his awed heart the hill of God,
Coilas, and Mainaac with its summits gold.
Awed he in heart, yet with a quicker stride
He moved and eyes of silent joy, like one
Who coming from long travel, sees the old
Village and children’s faces at the doors.
In a wild faery place where mountain streams
Glimmer from the dim rocks and meet the lake
Amid a wrestle of tangled trees and heaped
Moss-grown disordered stones, and all the water
Is hidden with its lotuses and sways
Shimmering between leaves or strains through bloom,
She sat, the mother of the Aryans, white
With a sublime pallor beneath her hair.
Musing, with wide creative brows, she sat
In a slight lovely dress fastened with flowers,
All heaped with her large tresses. Golden swans
Preened in the waters by her dipping feet.
One hand propped her fair marble cheek, the other
The mystic lotus hardly held. Seeing her
Pururavus bent to her and adored.
And she looked up and musing towards him
Said low: “O son, I knew thy steps afar.  
Of me thou wast; for as I suffered rapture,  
Invaded by the sea of images  
Breaking upon me from all winds, and saw  
Indus and Ganges with prophetic mind,  
A virginal impulse gleamed from my bosom  
And on the earth took beauty and form. I saw  
Thee from that glory issue and rejoiced.  
But now thou comest quite discrowned. From me,  
O son, thou hadst the impulse beautiful  
That made thy soul all colour. For I strive  
Towards the insufferable heights and flash  
With haloes of that sacred light intense.  
But lo! the spring and all its flowers, and lo!  
How bright the Soma juice. What golden joys,  
What living passions, what immortal tears!  
I lift the veil that hides the Immortal — Ah!  
My lids faint. Ah! the veil was lovelier.  
My flowers wither in that height, my swan  
Spreads not his wings felicitous so far.  
O one day I shall turn from the great verse  
And marble aspiration to sing sweetly  
Of lovers and the pomp of wealth and wine  
And warm delights and warm desires and earth.  
O mine own son, Pururavus, I fall  
By thy vast failure from my dazzling skies.”  
And Ila’s son made answer, “O white-armed,  
O mother of the Aryans, of my life  
Creatress! fates colossal overrule.  
But lo! I wander like a wave, nor find  
Limit to the desire that wastes my soul.”  
Then with a sweet immortal smile the mother  
Gave to him in the hollow of her hand  
Wonderful water of the lake. He drank,  
And understood infinity, and saw  
Time like a snake coiling among the stars;  
And earth he saw, and mortal nights and days
Grew to him moments, and his limbs became
Undying and his thoughts as marble endured.
Then to the hero deified the goddess,
“O strong immortal, now pursue thy joy:
Yet first rise up the peaks of Coilas; there
The Mighty Mother sits, whose sovran voice
Shall ratify to thee thy future fair,”
Said and caressed his brow with lips divine.
And bright Pururavus rose up the hill
Towards the breathless summit. Thence, enshrined
In deep concealing glories, came a voice,
And clearer he discerned as one whose eyes,
Long cognizant of darkness, coming forth,
Grow gradually habituated to light,
The calm compassionate face, the heaven-wide brow,
And the robust great limbs that bear the world.
Prophetical and deep her voice came down:
“Thou then hast failed, bright soul; but God blames not
Nor punishes. Impartially he deals
To every strenuous spirit its chosen reward.
And since no work, however maimed, no smallest
Energy added to the mighty sum
Of action fails of its exact result,
Empire shall in thy line and forceful brain
Persist, the boundless impulse towards rule
Of grandiose souls perpetually recur,
And minds immense and personalities
With battle and with passion and with storm
Shall burn through Aryan history, the speech
Of ages. In thy line the Spirit Supreme
Shall bound existence with one human form;
In Mathura and ocean Dwarca Man
Earthly perfectibility of soul
Example: son of thy line and eulogist,
The vast clear poet of the golden verse,
Whose song shall be as wide as is the world.
But all by huge self-will or violence marred
Of passionate uncontrol; if pure, their work
By touch of later turbulent hands unsphered
Or fames by legend stained. Upon my heights
Breathing God’s air, strong as the sky and pure,
Dwell only Ixvaacou’s children; destined theirs
Heaven’s perfect praise, earth’s sole unequalled song.
But thou, O Ila’s son, take up thy joy.
For thee in sweet Gundhurva world eternal
Rapture and clasp unloosed of Urvasie,
Till the long night when God asleep shall fall.”

Ceased the great voice and strong Pururavus
Glad of his high reward, however dearly
Purchased, purchased with infinite downfall,
With footing now divine went up the world.
Mid regions sweet and peaks of milk-white snow
And lovely corners and delicious lakes,
He saw a road all sunlight and the gates
Of the Gundhurvas’ home. O never ship
From Ocean into Ocean erring knew
Such joy through all its patient sails at sight
Of final haven near as the tried heart
Of earth’s successful son at that fair goal.
Towards the gates he hastened, and one bright
With angel face who at those portals stood
Cried down, “We wait for thee, Pururavus.”
Then to his hearing musical, the hinges
Called; he beheld the subtle faces look
Down on him and the crowd of luminous forms,
And entered to immortal sound of lyres.
Up through the streets a silver cry went on
Before him of high instruments. From all
The winds the marvellous musicians pressed
To welcome that immortal lover. One
Whose pure-limned brows aerial wore by right
Faery authority, stood from the crowd.
“O Ila’s son, far-famed Pururavus,
Destined to joys by mortals all unhoped!
Move to thy sacred glories as a star
Into its destined place, shine over us
Here greatest as upon thy greener earth."
They through the thrilling regions musical
Led him and marvelled at him and praised with song
His fair sublimity of form and brow
And warlike limbs and grace heroical.
He heeded not, for all his soul was straining
With expectation of a near delight.
His eyes that sought her ever, beheld a wall
Of mighty trees and, where they arched to part,
Those two of all their sisters brightest rise,
One blithe as is a happy brook, the other
With her grave smile; and each took a strong hand
In her soft clasp, and led him to a place
Distinct mid faery-leaved ethereal trees
And magic banks and sweet low curves of hills,
And over all the sunlight like a charm.
There by a sounding river downward thrown
From under low green-curtaining boughs was she.
Mute she arose and with wide quiet eyes
Came towards him. In their immortal looks
Was a deep feeling too august for joy,
The sense that all eternity must follow
One perfect moment. Then that comrade bright
With slow grave smile, “O after absence wide
Who meet and shall not sunder any more
Till slumber of the Supreme, strong be your souls
To bear unchanging rapture; strong you were
By patience to compel unwilling Gods.”
And they were left alone in that clear world.
Then all his soul towards her leaning, took
Pururavus into his clasp and felt,
Seriously glad, the golden bosom on his
Of Urvasie, his love; so pressing back
The longed-for sacred face, lingering he kissed.
Then Love in his sweet heavens was satisfied.
But far below through silent mighty space
The green and strenuous earth abandoned rolled.