

Canto Five

The Godheads of the Little Life

A FIXED and narrow power with rigid forms,
He saw the empire of the little life,
An unhappy corner in eternity.
It lived upon the margin of the Idea
Protected by Ignorance as in a shell.
Then, hoping to learn the secret of this world
He peered across its scanty fringe of sight,
To disengage from its surface-clear obscurity
The Force that moved it and the Idea that made,
Imposing smallness on the Infinite,
The ruling spirit of its littleness,
The divine law that gave it right to be,
Its claim on Nature and its need in Time.
He plunged his gaze into the siege of mist
That held this ill-lit straitened continent
Ringed with the skies and seas of ignorance
And kept it safe from Truth and Self and Light.
As when a searchlight stabs the Night's blind breast
And dwellings and trees and figures of men appear
As if revealed to an eye in Nothingness,
All lurking things were torn out of their veils
And held up in his vision's sun-white blaze.
A busy restless uncouth populace
Teemed in their dusky unnoted thousands there.
In a mist of secrecy wrapping the world-scene
The little deities of Time's nether act
Who work remote from Heaven's controlling eye,
Plotted, unknown to the creatures whom they move,
The small conspiracies of this petty reign
Amused with the small contrivings, the brief hopes
And little eager steps and little ways

And reptile wallowings in the dark and dust,
And the crouch and ignominy of creeping life.
A trepidant and motley multitude,
A strange pell-mell of magic artisans,
Was seen moulding the plastic clay of life,
An elfin brood, an elemental kind.
Astonished by the unaccustomed glow,
As if immanent in the shadows started up
Imps with wry limbs and carved beast visages,
Sprite-prompters goblin-wizened or faery-small,
And genii fairer but unsouled and poor
And fallen beings, their heavenly portion lost,
And errant divinities trapped in Time's dust.
Ignorant and dangerous wills but armed with power,
Half-animal, half-god their mood, their shape.
Out of the greyness of a dim background
Their whispers come, an inarticulate force,
Awake in mind an echoing thought or word,
To their sting of impulse the heart's sanction draw,
And in that little Nature do their work
And fill its powers and creatures with unease.
Its seed of joy they curse with sorrow's fruit,
Put out with error's breath its scanty lights
And turn its surface truths to falsehood's ends,
Its small emotions spur, its passions drive
To the abyss or through the bog and mire:
Or else with a goad of hard dry lusts they prick,
While jogs on devious ways that nowhere lead
Life's cart finding no issue from ignorance.
To sport with good and evil is their law;
Luring to failure and meaningless success,
All models they corrupt, all measures cheat,
Make knowledge a poison, virtue a pattern dull
And lead the endless cycles of desire
Through semblances of sad or happy chance
To an inescapable fatality.

All by their influence is enacted there.
Nor there alone is their empire or their role:
Wherever are soulless minds and guideless lives
And in a small body self is all that counts,
Wherever love and light and largeness lack,
These crooked fashioners take up their task.
To all half-conscious worlds they extend their reign.
Here too these godlings drive our human hearts,
Our nature's twilight is their lurking-place:
Here too the darkened primitive heart obeys
The veiled suggestions of a hidden Mind
That dogs our knowledge with misleading light
And stands between us and the Truth that saves.
It speaks to us with the voices of the Night:
Our darkened lives to greater darkness move;
Our seekings listen to calamitous hopes.
A structure of unseeing thoughts is built
And reason used by an irrational Force.
This earth is not alone our teacher and nurse;
The powers of all the worlds have entrance here.
In their own fields they follow the wheel of law
And cherish the safety of a settled type;
On earth out of their changeless orbit thrown
Their law is kept, lost their fixed form of things.
Into a creative chaos they are cast
Where all asks order but is driven by Chance;
Strangers to earth-nature, they must learn earth's ways,
Aliens or opposites, they must unite:
They work and battle and with pain agree:
These join, those part, all parts and joins anew,
But never can we know and truly live
Till all have found their divine harmony.
Our life's uncertain way winds circling on,
Our mind's unquiet search asks always light,
Till they have learned their secret in their source,
In the light of the Timeless and its spaceless home,

In the joy of the Eternal sole and one.
But now the Light supreme is far away:
Our conscious life obeys the Inconscient's laws;
To ignorant purposes and blind desires
Our hearts are moved by an ambiguous force;
Even our mind's conquests wear a battered crown.
A slowly changing order binds our will.
This is our doom until our souls are free.
A mighty Hand then rolls mind's firmaments back,
Infinity takes up the finite's acts
And Nature steps into the eternal Light.
Then only ends this dream of nether life.

At the outset of this enigmatic world
Which seems at once an enormous brute machine
And a slow unmasking of the spirit in things,
In this revolving chamber without walls
In which God sits impassive everywhere
As if unknown to himself and by us unseen
In a miracle of inconscient secrecy,
Yet is all here his action and his will.
In this whirl and sprawl through infinite vacancy
The Spirit became Matter and lay in the whirl,
A body sleeping without sense or soul.
A mass phenomenon of visible shapes
Supported by the silence of the Void
Appeared in the eternal Consciousness
And seemed an outward and insensible world.
There was none there to see and none to feel;
Only the miraculous Inconscient,
A subtle wizard skilled, was at its task.
Inventing ways for magical results,
Managing creation's marvellous device,
Marking mechanically dumb wisdom's points,
Using the unthought inevitable Idea,
It did the works of God's intelligence

Or wrought the will of some supreme Unknown.
Still consciousness was hidden in Nature's womb,
Unfelt was the Bliss whose rapture dreamed the worlds.
Being was an inert substance driven by Force.
At first was only an etheric Space:
Its huge vibrations circled round and round
Housing some unconceived initiative:
Upheld by a supreme original Breath
Expansion and contraction's mystic act
Created touch and friction in the void,
Into abstract emptiness brought clash and clasp:
Parent of an expanding universe
In a matrix of disintegrating force,
By spending it conserved an endless sum.
On the hearth of Space it kindled a viewless Fire
That, scattering worlds as one might scatter seeds,
Whirled out the luminous order of the stars.
An ocean of electric Energy
Formlessly formed its strange wave-particles
Constructing by their dance this solid scheme,
Its mightiness in the atom shut to rest;
Masses were forged or feigned and visible shapes;
Light flung the photon's swift revealing spark
And showed, in the minuteness of its flash
Imaged, this cosmos of apparent things.
Thus has been made this real impossible world,
An obvious miracle or convincing show.
Or so it seems to man's audacious mind
Who seats his thought as the arbiter of truth,
His personal vision as impersonal fact,
As witnesses of an objective world
His erring sense and his instruments' artifice.
Thus must he work life's tangible riddle out
In a doubtful light, by error seize on Truth
And slowly part the visage and the veil.
Or else, forlorn of faith in mind and sense,

His knowledge a bright body of ignorance,
He sees in all things strangely fashioned here
The unwelcome jest of a deceiving Force,
A parable of Maya and her might.
This vast perpetual motion caught and held
In the mysterious and unchanging change
Of the persistent movement we call Time
And ever renewing its recurrent beat,
These mobile rounds that stereotype a flux,
These static objects in the cosmic dance
That are but Energy's self-repeating whorls
Prolonged by the spirit of the brooding Void,
Awaited life and sense and waking Mind.
A little the Dreamer changed his pose of stone.
But when the Inconscient's scrupulous work was done
And Chance coerced by fixed immutable laws,
A scene was set for Nature's conscious play.
Then stirred the Spirit's mute immobile sleep;
The Force concealed broke dumbly, slowly out.
A dream of living woke in Matter's heart,
A will to live moved the Inconscient's dust,
A freak of living startled vacant Time,
Ephemeral in a blank eternity,
Infinitesimal in a dead Infinite.
A subtler breath quickened dead Matter's forms;
The world's set rhythm changed to a conscious cry;
A serpent Power twinned the insensible Force.
Islands of living dotted lifeless Space
And germs of living formed in formless air.
A Life was born that followed Matter's law,
Ignorant of the motives of its steps;
Ever inconstant, yet for ever the same,
It repeated the paradox that gave it birth:
Its restless and unstable stabilities
Recurred incessantly in the flow of Time
And purposeful movements in unthinking forms

Betrayed the heavings of an imprisoned Will.
Waking and sleep lay locked in mutual arms;
Helpless and indistinct came pleasure and pain
Trembling with the first faint thrills of a World-Soul.
A strength of life that could not cry or move,
Yet broke into beauty signing some deep delight:
An inarticulate sensibility,
Throbs of the heart of an unknowing world,
Ran through its somnolent torpor and there stirred
A vague uncertain thrill, a wandering beat,
A dim unclosing as of secret eyes.
Infant self-feeling grew and birth was born.
A godhead woke but lay with dreaming limbs;
Her house refused to open its sealed doors.
Insentient to our eyes that only see
The form, the act and not the imprisoned God,
Life hid in her pulse occult of growth and power
A consciousness with mute stifled beats of sense,
A mind suppressed that knew not yet of thought,
An inert spirit that could only be.
At first she raised no voice, no motion dared:
Charged with world-power, instinct with living force,
Only she clung with her roots to the safe earth,
Thrilled dumbly to the shocks of ray and breeze
And put out tendril fingers of desire;
The strength in her yearning for sun and light
Felt not the embrace that made her breathe and live;
Absorbed she dreamed content with beauty and hue.
At last the charmed Immensity looked forth:
Astir, vibrant, hungering, she groped for mind;
Then slowly sense quivered and thought peered out;
She forced the reluctant mould to grow aware.
The magic was chiselled of a conscious form;
Its tranced vibrations rhythmmed a quick response,
And luminous stirrings prompted brain and nerve,
Awoke in Matter spirit's identity

And in a body lit the miracle
Of the heart's love and the soul's witness gaze.
Impelled by an unseen Will there could break out
Fragments of some vast impulse to become
And vivid glimpses of a secret self,
And the doubtful seeds and force of shapes to be
Awoke from the unconscious swoon of things.
An animal creation crept and ran
And flew and called between the earth and sky,
Hunted by death but hoping still to live
And glad to breathe if only for a while.
Then man was moulded from the original brute.
A thinking mind had come to lift life's moods,
The keen-edged tool of a Nature mixed and vague,
An intelligence half-witness, half-machine.
This seeming driver of her wheel of works
Missioned to motive and record her drift
And fix its law on her inconstant powers,
This master-spring of a delicate enginery,
Aspired to enlighten its user and refine
Lifting to a vision of the indwelling Power
The absorbed mechanic's crude initiative:
He raised his eyes; Heaven-light mirrored a Face.
Amazed at the works wrought in her mystic sleep,
She looked upon the world that she had made:
Wondering now seized the great automaton;
She paused to understand her self and aim,
Pondering she learned to act by conscious rule,
A visioned measure guided her rhythmic steps;
Thought bordered her instincts with a frame of will
And lit with the idea her blinded urge.
On her mass of impulses, her reflex acts,
On the Inconscious's pushed or guided drift
And mystery of unthinking accurate steps
She stuck the specious image of a self,
A living idol of disfigured spirit;

On Matter's acts she imposed a patterned law;
She made a thinking body from chemic cells
And moulded a being out of a driven force.
To be what she was not inflamed her hope:
She turned her dream towards some high Unknown;
A breath was felt below of One supreme.
An opening looked up to spheres above
And coloured shadows limned on mortal ground
The passing figures of immortal things;
A quick celestial flash could sometimes come:
The illumined soul-ray fell on heart and flesh
And touched with semblances of ideal light
The stuff of which our earthly dreams are made.
A fragile human love that could not last,
Ego's moth-wings to lift the seraph soul,
Appeared, a surface glamour of brief date
Extinguished by a scanty breath of Time;
Joy that forgot mortality for a while
Came, a rare visitor who left betimes,
And made all things seem beautiful for an hour,
Hopes that soon fade to drab realities
And passions that crumble to ashes while they blaze
Kindled the common earth with their brief flame.
A creature insignificant and small
Visited, uplifted by an unknown Power,
Man laboured on his little patch of earth
For means to last, to enjoy, to suffer and die.
A spirit that perished not with the body and breath
Was there like a shadow of the Unmanifest
And stood behind the little personal form
But claimed not yet this earthly embodiment.
Assenting to Nature's long slow-moving toil,
Watching the works of his own Ignorance,
Unknown, unfelt the mighty Witness lives
And nothing shows the Glory that is here.
A Wisdom governing the mystic world,

A Silence listening to the cry of Life,
It sees the hurrying crowd of moments stream
Towards the still greatness of a distant hour.

This huge world unintelligibly turns
In the shadow of a mused Inconscience;
It hides a key to inner meanings missed,
It locks in our hearts a voice we cannot hear.
An enigmatic labour of the spirit,
An exact machine of which none knows the use,
An art and ingenuity without sense,
This minute elaborate orchestrated life
For ever plays its motiveless symphonies.
The mind learns and knows not, turning its back to truth;
It studies surface laws by surface thought,
Life's steps surveys and Nature's process sees,
Not seeing for what she acts or why we live;
It marks her tireless care of just device,
Her patient intricacy of fine detail,
The ingenious spirit's brave inventive plan
In her great futile mass of endless works,
Adds purposeful figures to her purposeless sum,
Its gabled storeys piles, its climbing roofs
On the close-carved foundations she has laid,
Imagined citadels reared in mythic air
Or mounts a stair of dream to a mystic moon:
Transient creations point and hit the sky:
A world-conjecture's scheme is laboured out
On the dim floor of mind's incertitude,
Or painfully built a fragmentary whole.
Impenetrable, a mystery recondite
Is the vast plan of which we are a part;
Its harmonies are discords to our view
Because we know not the great theme they serve.
Inscrutable work the cosmic agencies.
Only the fringe of a wide surge we see;

Our instruments have not that greater light,
Our will tunes not with the eternal Will,
Our heart's sight is too blind and passionate.
Impotent to share in Nature's mystic tact,
Inapt to feel the pulse and core of things,
Our reason cannot sound life's mighty sea
And only counts its waves and scans its foam;
It knows not whence these motions touch and pass,
It sees not whither sweeps the hurrying flood:
Only it strives to canalise its powers
And hopes to turn its course to human ends:
But all its means come from the Inconscient's store.
Unseen here act dim huge world-energies
And only trickles and currents are our share.
Our mind lives far off from the authentic Light
Catching at little fragments of the Truth
In a small corner of infinity,
Our lives are inlets of an ocean's force.
Our conscious movements have sealed origins
But with those shadowy seats no converse hold;
No understanding binds our comrade parts;
Our acts emerge from a crypt our minds ignore.
Our deepest depths are ignorant of themselves;
Even our body is a mystery shop;
As our earth's roots lurk screened below our earth,
So lie unseen our roots of mind and life.
Our springs are kept close hid beneath, within;
Our souls are moved by powers behind the wall.
In the subterranean reaches of the spirit
A puissance acts and recks not what it means;
Using unthinking monitors and scribes,
It is the cause of what we think and feel.
The troglodytes of the subconscious Mind,
Ill-trained slow stammering interpreters
Only of their small task's routine aware
And busy with the record in our cells,

Concealed in the subliminal secrecies
Mid an obscure occult machinery,
Capture the mystic Morse whose measured lilt
Transmits the messages of the cosmic Force.
A whisper falls into life's inner ear
And echoes from the dun subconscious caves,
Speech leaps, thought quivers, the heart vibrates, the will
Answers and tissue and nerve obey the call.
Our lives translate these subtle intimacies;
All is the commerce of a secret Power.

A thinking puppet is the mind of life:
Its choice is the work of elemental strengths
That know not their own birth and end and cause
And glimpse not the immense intent they serve.
In this nether life of man drab-hued and dull,
Yet filled with poignant small ignoble things,
The conscious Doll is pushed a hundred ways
And feels the push but not the hands that drive.
For none can see the masked ironic troupe
To whom our figure-selves are marionettes,
Our deeds unwitting movements in their grasp,
Our passionate strife an entertainment's scene.
Ignorant themselves of their own fount of strength
They play their part in the enormous whole.
Agents of darkness imitating light,
Spirits obscure and moving things obscure,
Unwillingly they serve a mightier Power.
Ananke's engines organising Chance,
Channels perverse of a stupendous Will,
Tools of the Unknown who use us as their tools,
Invested with power in Nature's nether state,
Into the actions mortals think their own
They bring the incoherencies of Fate,
Or make a doom of Time's slipshod caprice
And toss the lives of men from hand to hand
In an inconsequent and devious game.

Against all higher truth their stuff rebels;
Only to Titan force their will lies prone.
Inordinate their hold on human hearts,
In all our nature's turns they intervene.
Insignificant architects of low-built lives
And engineers of interest and desire,
Out of crude earthiness and muddy thrills
And coarse reactions of material nerve
They build our huddled structures of self-will
And the ill-lighted mansions of our thought,
Or with the ego's factories and marts
Surround the beautiful temple of the soul.
Artists minute of the hues of littleness,
They set the mosaic of our comedy
Or plan the trivial tragedy of our days,
Arrange the deed, combine the circumstance
And the fantasia of the moods costume.
These unwise prompters of man's ignorant heart
And tutors of his stumbling speech and will,
Movers of petty wraths and lusts and hates
And changeful thoughts and shallow emotion's starts,
These slight illusion-makers with their masks,
Painters of the decor of a dull-hued stage
And nimble scene-shifters of the human play,
Ever are busy with this ill-lit scene.
Ourselves incapable to build our fate
Only as actors speak and strut our parts
Until the piece is done and we pass off
Into a brighter Time and subtler Space.
Thus they inflict their little pigmy law
And curb the mounting slow uprising of man,
Then his too scanty walk with death they close.

 This is the ephemeral creature's daily life.
As long as the human animal is lord
And a dense nether nature screens the soul,

As long as intellect's outward-gazing sight
Serves earthy interest and creature joys,
An incurable littleness pursues his days.
Ever since consciousness was born on earth,
Life is the same in insect, ape and man,
Its stuff unchanged, its way the common route.
If new designs, if richer details grow
And thought is added and more tangled cares,
If little by little it wears a brighter face,
Still even in man the plot is mean and poor.
A gross content prolongs his fallen state;
His small successes are failures of the soul,
His little pleasures punctuate frequent griefs:
Hardship and toil are the heavy price he pays
For the right to live and his last wages death.
An inertia sunk towards inconscience,
A sleep that imitates death is his repose.
A puny splendour of creative force
Is made his spur to fragile human works
Which yet outlast their brief creator's breath.
He dreams sometimes of the revels of the gods
And sees the Dionysian gesture pass, —
A leonine greatness that would tear his soul
If through his failing limbs and fainting heart
The sweet and joyful mighty madness swept:
Trivial amusements stimulate and waste
The energy given to him to grow and be.
His little hour is spent in little things.
A brief companionship with many jars,
A little love and jealousy and hate,
A touch of friendship mid indifferent crowds
Draw his heart-plan on life's diminutive map.
If something great awakes, too frail his pitch
To reveal its zenith tension of delight,
His thought to eternise its ephemeral soar,
Art's brilliant gleam is a pastime for his eyes,

A thrill that smites the nerves is music's spell.
Amidst his harassed toil and welter of cares,
Pressed by the labour of his crowding thoughts,
He draws sometimes around his aching brow
Nature's calm mighty hands to heal his life-pain.
He is saved by her silence from his rack of self;
In her tranquil beauty is his purest bliss.
A new life dawns, he looks out from vistas wide;
The Spirit's breath moves him but soon retires:
His strength was not made to hold that puissant guest.
All dulls down to convention and routine
Or a fierce excitement brings him vivid joys:
His days are tinged with the red hue of strife
And lust's hot glare and passion's crimson stain;
Battle and murder are his tribal game.
Time has he none to turn his eyes within
And look for his lost self and his dead soul.
His motion on too short an axis wheels;
He cannot soar but creeps on his long road
Or if, impatient of the trudge of Time,
He would make a splendid haste on Fate's slow road,
His heart that runs soon pants and tires and sinks;
Or he walks ever on and finds no end.
Hardly a few can climb to greater life.
All tunes to a low scale and conscious pitch.
His knowledge dwells in the house of Ignorance;
His force nears not even once the Omnipotent,
Rare are his visits of heavenly ecstasy.
The bliss which sleeps in things and tries to wake,
Breaks out in him in a small joy of life:
This scanty grace is his persistent stay;
It lightens the burden of his many ills
And reconciles him to his little world.
He is satisfied with his common average kind;
Tomorrow's hopes and his old rounds of thought,
His old familiar interests and desires

He has made into a thick and narrowing hedge
Defending his small life from the Invisible;
His being's kinship to infinity
He has shut away from him into inmost self,
Fenced off the greatneses of hidden God.
His being was formed to play a trivial part
In a little drama on a petty stage;
In a narrow plot he has pitched his tent of life
Beneath the wide gaze of the starry Vast.
He is the crown of all that has been done:
Thus is creation's labour justified;
This is the world's result, Nature's last poise!
And if this were all and nothing more were meant,
If what now seems were the whole of what must be,
If this were not a stade through which we pass
On our road from Matter to eternal Self,
To the Light that made the worlds, the Cause of things,
Well might interpret our mind's limited view
Existence as an accident in Time,
Illusion or phenomenon or freak,
The paradox of a creative Thought
Which moves between unreal opposites,
Inanimate Force struggling to feel and know,
Matter that chanced to read itself by Mind,
Inconscience monstrously engendering soul.
At times all looks unreal and remote:
We seem to live in a fiction of our thoughts
Pieced from sensation's fanciful traveller's tale,
Or caught on the film of the recording brain,
A figment or circumstance in cosmic sleep.
A somnambulist walking under the moon,
An image of ego treads through an ignorant dream
Counting the moments of a spectral Time.
In a false perspective of effect and cause,
Trusting to a specious prospect of world-space,
It drifts incessantly from scene to scene,

Whither it knows not, to what fabulous verge.
All here is dreamed or doubtfully exists,
But who the dreamer is and whence he looks
Is still unknown or only a shadowy guess.
Or the world is real but ourselves too small,
Insufficient for the mightiness of our stage.
A thin life-curve crosses the titan whirl
Of the orbit of a soulless universe,
And in the belly of the sparse rolling mass
A mind looks out from a small casual globe
And wonders what itself and all things are.
And yet to some interned subjective sight
That strangely has formed in Matter's sightless stuff,
A pointillage minute of little self
Takes figure as world-being's conscious base.
Such is our scene in the half-light below.
This is the sign of Matter's infinite,
This the weird purport of the picture shown
To Science the giantess, measurer of her field,
As she pores on the record of her close survey
And mathematizes her huge external world,
To Reason bound within the circle of sense,
Or in Thought's broad impalpable Exchange
A speculator in tenuous vast ideas,
Abstractions in the void her currency
We know not with what firm values for its base.
Only religion in this bankruptcy
Presents its dubious riches to our hearts
Or signs unprovisioned cheques on the Beyond:
Our poverty shall there have its revenge.
Our spirits depart discarding a futile life
Into the blank unknown or with them take
Death's passport into immortality.

Yet was this only a provisional scheme,
A false appearance sketched by limiting sense,

Mind's insufficient self-discovery,
An early attempt, a first experiment.
This was a toy to amuse the infant earth;
But knowledge ends not in these surface powers
That live upon a ledge in the Ignorance
And dare not look into the dangerous depths
Or to stare upward measuring the Unknown.
There is a deeper seeing from within
And, when we have left these small purlieus of mind,
A greater vision meets us on the heights
In the luminous wideness of the spirit's gaze.
At last there wakes in us a witness Soul
That looks at truths unseen and scans the Unknown;
Then all assumes a new and marvellous face:
The world quivers with a God-light at its core,
In Time's deep heart high purposes move and live,
Life's borders crumble and join infinity.
This broad, confused, yet rigid scheme becomes
A magnificent imbroglio of the Gods,
A game, a work ambiguously divine.
Our seekings are short-lived experiments
Made by a wordless and inscrutable Power
Testing its issues from inconscient Night
To meet its luminous self of Truth and Bliss.
It peers at the Real through the apparent form;
It labours in our mortal mind and sense;
Amid the figures of the Ignorance,
In the symbol pictures drawn by word and thought,
It seeks the truth to which all figures point;
It looks for the source of Light with vision's lamp;
It works to find the Doer of all works,
The unfelt Self within who is the guide,
The unknown Self above who is the goal.
All is not here a blinded Nature's task:
A Word, a Wisdom watches us from on high,
A Witness sanctioning her will and works,

An Eye unseen in the unseeing vast;
There is an Influence from a Light above,
There are thoughts remote and sealed eternities;
A mystic motive drives the stars and suns.
In this passage from a deaf unknowing Force
To struggling consciousness and transient breath
A mighty Supernature waits on Time.
The world is other than we now think and see,
Our lives a deeper mystery than we have dreamed;
Our minds are starters in the race to God,
Our souls deputed selves of the Supreme.
Across the cosmic field through narrow lanes
Asking a scanty dole from Fortune's hands
And garbed in beggar's robes there walks the One.
Even in the theatre of these small lives
Behind the act a secret sweetness breathes,
An urge of miniature divinity.
A mystic passion from the wells of God
Flows through the guarded spaces of the soul;
A force that helps supports the suffering earth,
An unseen nearness and a hidden joy.
There are muffled throbs of laughter's undertones,
The murmur of an occult happiness,
An exultation in the depths of sleep,
A heart of bliss within a world of pain.
An Infant nursed on Nature's covert breast,
An Infant playing in the magic woods,
Fluting to rapture by the spirit's streams,
Awaits the hour when we shall turn to his call.
In this investiture of fleshly life
A soul that is a spark of God survives
And sometimes it breaks through the sordid screen
And kindles a fire that makes us half-divine.
In our body's cells there sits a hidden Power
That sees the unseen and plans eternity,
Our smallest parts have room for deepest needs;

There too the golden Messengers can come:
A door is cut in the mud wall of self;
Across the lowly threshold with bowed heads
Angels of ecstasy and self-giving pass,
And lodged in an inner sanctuary of dream
The makers of the image of deity live.
Pity is there and fire-winged sacrifice,
And flashes of sympathy and tenderness
Cast heaven-lights from the heart's secluded shrine.
A work is done in the deep silences;
A glory and wonder of spiritual sense,
A laughter in beauty's everlasting space
Transforming world-experience into joy,
Inhabit the mystery of the untouched gulfs;
Lulled by Time's beats eternity sleeps in us.
In the sealed hermetic heart, the happy core,
Unmoved behind this outer shape of death
The eternal Entity prepares within
Its matter of divine felicity,
Its reign of heavenly phenomenon.
Even in our sceptic mind of ignorance
A foresight comes of some immense release,
Our will lifts towards it slow and shaping hands.
Each part in us desires its absolute.
Our thoughts covet the everlasting Light,
Our strength derives from an omnipotent Force,
And since from a veiled God-joy the worlds were made
And since eternal Beauty asks for form
Even here where all is made of being's dust,
Our hearts are captured by ensnaring shapes,
Our very senses blindly seek for bliss.
Our error crucifies Reality
To force its birth and divine body here,
Compelling, incarnate in a human form
And breathing in limbs that one can touch and clasp,
Its Knowledge to rescue an ancient Ignorance,

Its saviour light the inconscient universe.
And when that greater Self comes sea-like down
To fill this image of our transience,
All shall be captured by delight, transformed:
In waves of undreamed ecstasy shall roll
Our mind and life and sense and laugh in a light
Other than this hard limited human day,
The body's tissues thrill apotheosised,
Its cells sustain bright metamorphosis.
This little being of Time, this shadow soul,
This living dwarf-figurehead of darkened spirit
Out of its traffic in petty dreams shall rise.
Its shape of person and its ego-face
Divested of this mortal travesty,
Like a clay troll kneaded into a god
New-made in the image of the eternal Guest,
It shall be caught to the breast of a white Force
And, flaming with the paradisal touch
In a rose-fire of sweet spiritual grace,
In the red passion of its infinite change,
Quiver, awake, and shudder with ecstasy.
As if reversing a deformation's spell,
Released from the black magic of the Night,
Renouncing servitude to the dim Abyss,
It shall learn at last who lived within unseen,
And seized with marvel in the adoring heart
To the enthroned Child-Godhead kneel aware,
Trembling with beauty and delight and love.
But first the spirit's ascent we must achieve
Out of the chasm from which our nature rose.
The soul must soar sovereign above the form
And climb to summits beyond mind's half-sleep;
Our hearts we must inform with heavenly strength,
Surprise the animal with the occult god.
Then kindling the gold tongue of sacrifice,
Calling the powers of a bright hemisphere,

We shall shed the discredit of our mortal state,
Make the abyss a road for Heaven's descent,
Acquaint our depths with the supernal Ray
And cleave the darkness with the mystic Fire.

Adventuring once more in the natal mist
Across the dangerous haze, the pregnant stir,
He through the astral chaos shore a way
Mid the grey faces of its demon gods,
Questioned by whispers of its flickering ghosts,
Besieged by sorceries of its fluent force.
As one who walks unguided through strange fields
Tending he knows not where nor with what hope,
He trod a soil that failed beneath his feet
And journeyed in stone strength to a fugitive end.
His trail behind him was a vanishing line
Of glimmering points in a vague immensity;
A bodiless murmur travelled at his side
In the wounded gloom complaining against light.
A huge obstruction its immobile heart,
The watching opacity multiplied as he moved
Its hostile mass of dead and staring eyes;
The darkness glimmered like a dying torch.
Around him an extinguished phantom glow
Peopled with shadowy and misleading shapes
The vague Inconscient's dark and measureless cave.
His only sunlight was his spirit's flame.

END OF CANTO FIVE