

Track 44: Section 4, lines 458 to 601

This is the ephemeral creature's daily life.
As long as the human animal is lord
460 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,
465 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,
470 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
475 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
480 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
485 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,
490 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,
495 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,
500 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;
505 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

510 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.

515 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.

520 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.

525 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.

530 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;

535 His being's kinship to infinity
 He has shut away from him into inmost self,
 Fenced off the greatnesses of hidden God.
 His being was formed to play a trivial part
 In a little drama on a petty stage;

540 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!

545 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,

550 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,

555 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

560 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,

565 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.

570 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.

575 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.

580 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.

585 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,

590 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.

595 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

600 Into the blank unknown or with them take
Death's passport into immortality.