

THE LIGHT OF ASIA

By Sir Edwin Arnold



PRABHAT PRAKASHAN

ISO 9001: 2015 Publishers

Passed the Queen's joy, as when warm sunshine thrills
Wood-glooms to gold, and into all the deeps
A tender whisper pierced. "Oh ye," it said,
"The dead that are to live, the live who die,
Uprise, and hear, and hope! Buddha is come!"
Whereat in Limbos numberless much peace
Spread, and the world's heart throbbed, and a wind blew
With unknown freshness over lands and seas.
And when the morning dawned, and this was told,
The grey dream-readers said "The dream is good!
The Crab is in conjunction with the Sun;
The Queen shall bear a boy, a holy child
Of wondrous wisdom, profiting all flesh,
Who shall deliver men from ignorance,
Or rule the world, if he will deign to rule."

In this wise was the holy Buddha born.

Queen Maya stood at noon, her days fulfilled,
Under a Palsa in the Palace-grounds,
A stately trunk, straight as a temple-shaft,
With crown of glossy leaves and fragrant blooms;
And, knowing the time some—for all things knew—
The conscious tree bent down its boughs to make
A bower above Queen Maya's majesty,
And Earth put forth a thousand sudden flowers
To spread a couch, while, ready for the bath,
The rock hard by gave out a limpid stream
Of crystal flow. So brought she forth her child
Pangless—he having on his perfect form
The marks, thirty and two, of blessed birth;
Of which the great news to the Palace came.
But when they brought the painted palanquin
To fetch him home, the bearers of the poles
Were the four Regents of the Earth, come down
From Mount Sumeru—they who write men's deeds
On brazen plates—the Angel of the East,
Whose hosts are clad in silver robes, and bear
Targets of pearl: the Angel of the South,
Whose horsemen, the Kumbhandas, ride blue steeds,

With sapphire shields: the Angel of the West,
By Nagas followed, riding steeds blood-red,
With coral shields: the Angel of the North,
Environed by his Yakshas, all in gold,
On yellow horses, bearing shields of gold.
These, with their pomp invisible, came down
And took the poles, in caste and outward garb
Like bearers, yet most mighty gods; and gods
Walked free with men that day, though men knew not
For Heaven was filled with gladness for Earth's sake,
Knowing Lord Buddha thus was come again.

But King Suddhodana wist not of this;
The portents troubled, till his dream-readers
Augured a Prince of earthly dominance,
A Chakravartin, such as rise to rule
Once in each thousand years; seven gifts he has
The Chakra-ratna, disc divine; the gem;
The horse, the Aswa-ratna, that proud steed
Which tramps the clouds; a snow-white elephant,
The Hasti-ratna, born to bear his King;
The crafty Minister, the General
Unconquered, and the wife of peerless grace,
The Istri-ratna, lovelier than the Dawn.
For which gifts looking with this wondrous boy,
The King gave order that his town should keep
High festival; therefore the ways were swept,
Rose-odours sprinkled in the street, the trees
Were hung with lamps and flags, while merry crowds
Gaped on the sword-players and posturers,
The jugglers, charmers, swingers, rope-walkers,
The nautch-girls in their spangled skirts and bells
That chime light laughter round their restless feet;
The masquers wrapped in skins of bear and deer.
The tiger-tamers, wrestlers, quail-fighters,
Beaters of drum and twanglers of the wire,
Who made the people happy by command.
Moreover from afar came merchant-men,
Bringing, on tidings of this birth, rich gifts
In golden trays; goat-shawls, and nard and jade,

Turkises, “evening-sky” tint, woven webs—
So fine twelve folds hide not a modest face—
Waist-cloths sewn thick with pearls, and sandalwood;
Homage from tribute cities; so they called
Their Prince Svarthasiddh, “All-Prospering,”
Briefer, Siddartha.

'Mongst the strangers came
A grey-haired saint, Asita, one whose ears,
Long closed to earthly things, caught heavenly sounds,
And heard at prayer beneath his peepul-tree
The Devas singing songs at Buddha's birth.
Wondrous in lore he was by age and fasts;
Him, drawing nigh, seeming so reverend,
The King saluted, and Queen Maya made
To lay her babe before such holy feet;
But when he saw the Prince the old man cried
“Ah, Queen, not so!” and thereupon he touched
Eight times the dust, laid his waste visage there,
Saying, “O Babe! I worship! Thou art He!
I see the rosy light, the foot-sole marks,
The soft curled tendril of the Swastika,
The sacred primal signs thirty and two,
The eighty lesser tokens. Thou art Buddh,
And thou wilt preach the Law and save all flesh
Who learn the Law, though I shall never hear,
Dying too soon, who lately longed to die;
Howbeit I have seen Thee. Know, O King!
This is that Blossom on our human tree
Which opens once in many myriad years—
But opened, fills the world with Wisdom's scent
And Love's dropped honey; from thy royal root
A Heavenly Lotus springs: Ah, happy House!
Yet not all-happy, for a sword must pierce
Thy bowels for this boy—whilst thou, sweet Queen!
Dear to all gods and men for this great birth,
Henceforth art grown too sacred for more woe,
And life is woe, therefore in seven days
Painless thou shalt attain the close of pain.”

Which fell: for on the seventh evening
Queen Maya smiling slept, and waked no more,
Passing content to Trayastrinshas-Heaven,
Where countless Devas worship her and wait
Attendant on that radiant Motherhead.
But for the Babe they found a foster-nurse,
Princess Mahaprajapati—her breast
Nourished with noble milk the lips of
Him Whose lips comfort the Worlds.

When th' eighth year passed
The careful King bethought to teach his son
All that a Prince should learn, for still he shunned
The too vast presage of those miracles,
The glories and the sufferings of a Buddh.
So, in full council of his Ministers,
“Who is the wisest man, great sirs,” he asked,
“To teach my Prince that which a Prince should know?”
Whereto gave answer each with instant voice
“King! Viswamitra is the wisest one,
The farthest-seen in Scriptures, and the best
In learning, and the manual arts, and all.”
Thus Viswamitra came and heard commands;
And, on a day found fortunate, the Prince
Took up his slate of ox-red sandal-wood,
All-beautified by gems around the rim,
And sprinkled smooth with dust of emery,
These took he, and his writing-stick, and stood
With eyes bent down before the Sage, who said,
“Child, write this Scripture, speaking slow the verse
'Gayatri' named, which only High-born hear:—

“Om, tatsaviturvarenyam
Bhargo devasya dhimahi
Dhiyo yo na prachodayat.”

“Acharya, I write,” meekly replied
The Prince, and quickly on the dust he drew—
Not in one script, but many characters
The sacred verse; Nagri and Dakshin, Ni,

Mangal, Parusha, Yava, Tirthi, Uk,
Darad, Sikhyani, Mana, Madhyachar,
The pictured writings and the speech of signs,
Tokens of cave-men and the sea-peoples,
Of those who worship snakes beneath the earth,
And those who flame adore and the sun's orb,
The Magians and the dwellers on the mounds;
Of all the nations all strange scripts he traced
One after other with his writing-stick.
Reading the master's verse in every tongue;
And Viswamitra said, "It is enough,
Let us to numbers.

"After me repeat
Your numeration till we reach the Lakh,
One, two, three, four, to ten, and then by tens
To hundreds, thousands." After him the child
Named digits, decads, centuries; nor paused,
The round Lakh reached, but softly murmured on
"Then comes the koti, nahut, ninnahut,
Khamba, viskhamba, abab, attata,
To kumuds, gundhikas, and utpalas,
By pundarikas unto padumas,
Which last is how you count the utmost grains
Of Hastagiri ground to finest dust;
But beyond that a numeration is,
The Katha, used to count the stars of night;
The Koti-Katha, for the ocean drops;
Ingga, the calculus of circulars;
Sarvanikchepa, by the which you deal
With all the sands of Gunga, till we come
To Antah-Kalpas, where the unit is
The sands of ten crore Gungas. If one seeks
More comprehensive scale, th' arithmic mounts
By the Asankya, which is the tale
Of all the drops that in ten thousand years
Would fall on all the worlds by daily rain;
Thence unto Maha Kalpas, by the which
The Gods compute their future and their past."

“Tis good,” the Sage rejoined, “Most noble Prince,
If these thou know'st, needs it that I should teach
The mensuration of the lineal?”
Humbly the boy replied, “Acharya!”
“Be pleased to hear me. Paramanus ten
A parasukshma make; ten of those build
The trasarene, and seven trasarenes
One mote's-length floating in the beam, seven motes
The whisker-point of mouse, and ten of these
One likhya; likhyas ten a yuka, ten
Yukas a heart of barley, which is held
Seven times a wasp-waist; so unto the grain
Of mung and mustard and the barley-corn,
Whereof ten give the finger joint, twelve joints
The span, wherefrom we reach the cubit, staff,
Bow-length, lance-length; while twenty lengths of lance
Metre what is named a 'breath,' which is to say
Such space as man may stride with lungs once filled,
Whereof a gow is forty, four times that
A yojana; and, Master! if it please,
I shall recite how many sun-motes lie
From end to end within a yojana.”
Thereat, with instant skill, the little Prince
Pronounced the total of the atoms true.
But Viswamitra heard it on his face
Prostrate before the boy; “For thou,” he cried,
“Art Teacher of thy teachers—thou, not I,
Art Guru. Oh, I worship thee, sweet Prince!
That comest to my school only to show
Thou knowest all without the books, and know'st
Fair reverence besides.”

Which reverence
Lord Buddha kept to all his schoolmasters,
Albeit beyond their learning taught; in speech
Right gentle, yet so wise; princely of mien,
Yet softly-mannered; modest, deferent,
And tender-hearted, though of fearless blood;
No bolder horseman in the youthful band
E'er rode in gay chase of the shy gazelles;

No keener driver of the chariot
In mimic contest scoured the Palace-courts;
Yet in mid-play the boy would oft-times pause,
Letting the deer pass free; would oft-times yield
His half-won race because the labouring steeds
Fetched painful breath; or if his princely mates
Saddened to lose, or if some wistful dream
Swept o'er his thoughts. And ever with the years
Waxed this compassionateness of our Lord,
Even as a great tree grows from two soft leaves
To spread its shade afar; but hardly yet
Knew the young child of sorrow, pain, or tears,
Save as strange names for things not felt by kings,
Nor ever to be felt. But it befell
In the Royal garden on a day of spring,
A flock of wild swans passed, voyaging north
To their nest-places on Himala's breast.
Calling in love-notes down their snowy line
The bright birds flew, by fond love piloted;
And Devadatta, cousin of the Prince,
Pointed his bow, and loosed a wilful shaft
Which found the wide wing of the foremost swan
Broad-spread to glide upon the free blue road,
So that it fell, the bitter arrow fixed,
Bright scarlet blood-gouts staining the pure plumes.
Which seeing, Prince Siddartha took the bird
Tenderly up, rested it in his lap
Sitting with knees crossed, as Lord Buddha sits
And, soothing with a touch the wild thing's fright,
Composed its ruffled vans, calmed its quick heart,
Caressed it into peace with light kind palms
As soft as plantain-leaves an hour unrolled;
And while the left hand held, the right hand drew
The cruel steel forth from the wound and laid
Cool leaves and healing honey on the smart.
Yet all so little knew the boy of pain
That curiously into his wrist he pressed
The arrow's barb, and winced to feel it sting,
And turned with tears to soothe his bird again.

Then some one came who said, "My Prince hath shot
A swan, which fell among the roses here,
He bids me pray you send it. Will you send?"
"Nay," quoth Siddartha, "if the bird were dead
To send it to the slayer might be well,
But the swan lives; my cousin hath but killed
The god-like speed which throbbed in this white wing."
And Devadatta answered, "The wild thing,
Living or dead, is his who fetched it down;
'T was no man's in the clouds, but fall'n 't is mine,
Give me my prize, fair Cousin." Then our Lord
Laid the swan's neck beside his own smooth cheek
And gravely spake, "Say no! the bird is mine,
The first of myriad things which shall be mine
By right of mercy and love's lordliness.
For now I know, by what within me stirs,
That I shall teach compassion unto men
And be a speechless world's interpreter,
Abating this accursed flood of woe,
Not man's alone; but, if the Prince disputes,
Let him submit this matter to the wise
And we will wait their word." So was it done;
In full divan the business had debate,
And many thought this thing and many that,
Till there arose an unknown priest who said,
"If life be aught, the saviour of a life
Owns more the living thing than he can own
Who sought to slay—the slayer spoils and wastes,
The cherisher sustains, give him the bird:"
Which judgment all found just; but when the King
Sought out the sage for honour, he was gone;
And some one saw a hooded snake glide forth,—
The gods come oftentimes thus! So our Lord Buddh
Began his works of mercy.

Yet not more
Knew he as yet of grief than that one bird's,
Which, being healed, went joyous to its kind.
But on another day the King said, "Come,
Sweet son! and see the pleasaunce of the spring,

And how the fruitful earth is wooed to yield
Its riches to the reaper; how my realm—
Which shall be thine when the pile flames for me—
Feeds all its mouths and keeps the King's chest filled.
Fair is the season with new leaves, bright blooms,
Green grass, and cries of plough-time.” So they rode
Into a lane of wells and gardens, where,
All up and down the rich red loam, the steers
Strained their strong shoulders in the creaking yoke
Dragging the ploughs; the fat soil rose and rolled
In smooth dark waves back from the plough; who drove
Planted both feet upon the leaping share
To make the furrow deep; among the palms
The tinkle of the rippling water rang,
And where it ran the glad earth 'broidered it
With balsams and the spears of lemon-grass.
Elsewhere were sowers who went forth to sow;
And all the jungle laughed with nesting-songs,
And all the thickets rustled with small life
Of lizard, bee, beetle, and creeping things
Pleased at the spring-time. In the mango-sprays
The sun-birds flashed; alone at his green forge
Toiled the loud coppersmith; bee-eaters hawked
Chasing the purple butterflies; beneath,
Striped squirrels raced, the mynas perked and picked,
The nine brown sisters chattered in the thorn,
The pied fish-tiger hung above the pool,
The egrets stalked among the buffaloes,
The kites sailed circles in the golden air;
About the painted temple peacocks flew,
The blue doves cooed from every well, far off
The village drums beat for some marriage-feast;
All things spoke peace and plenty, and the Prince
Saw and rejoiced. But, looking deep, he saw
The thorns which grow upon this rose of life
How the sweat peasant sweated for his wage,
Toiling for leave to live; and how he urged
The great-eyed oxen through the flaming hours,
Goading their velvet flanks: then marked he, too,

How lizard fed on ant, and snake on him,
And kite on both; and how the fish-hawk robbed
The fish-tiger of that which it had seized;
The shrike chasing the bulbul, which did chase
The jewelled butterflies; till everywhere
Each slew a slayer and in turn was slain,
Life living upon death. So the fair show
Veiled one vast, savage, grim conspiracy
Of mutual murder, from the worm to man,
Who himself kills his fellow; seeing which—
The hungry ploughman and his labouring kine,
Their dewlaps blistered with the bitter yoke,
The rage to live which makes all living strife—
The Prince Siddhartha sighed. “In this,” he said,
“That happy earth they brought me forth to see?
How salt with sweat the peasant's bread! how hard
The oxen's service! in the brake how fierce
The war of weak and strong! i' th' air what plots!
No refuge e'en in water. Go aside
A space, and let me muse on what ye show.”
So saying, the good Lord Buddha seated him
Under a jambu-tree, with ankles crossed—
As holy statues sit—and first began
To meditate this deep disease of life,
What its far source and whence its remedy.
So vast a pity filled him, such wide love
For living things, such passion to heal pain,
That by their stress his princely spirit passed
To ecstasy, and, purged from mortal taint
Of sense and self, the boy attained thereat
Dhyana, first step of “the path.”

There flew
High overhead that hour five holy ones,
Whose free wings faltered as they passed the tree.
“What power superior draws us from our flight?”
They asked, for spirits feel all force divine,
And know the sacred presence of the pure.
Then, looking downward, they beheld the Buddha
Crowned with a rose-hued aureole, intent

On thoughts to save; while from the grove a voice
Cried, "Rishis! this is He shall help the world,
Descend and worship." So the Bright Ones came
And sang a song of praise, folding their wings,
Then journeyed on, taking good news to Gods.

But certain from the King seeking the Prince
Found him still musing, though the noon was past,
And the sun hastened to the western hills
Yet, while all shadows moved, the jambu-tree's
Stayed in one quarter, overspreading him,
Lest the sloped rays should strike that sacred head;
And he who saw this sight heard a voice say,
Amid the blossoms of the rose-apple,
"Let be the King's son! till the shadow goes
Forth from his heart my shadow will not shift."



Book The Second

Now, when our Lord was come to eighteen years,
The King commanded that there should be built
Three stately houses, one of hewn square beams
With cedar lining, warm for winter days;
One of veined marbles, cool for summer heat;
And one of burned bricks, with blue tiles bedecked,
Pleasant at seed-time, when the champaks bud—
Subha, Suramma, Ramma, were their names.
Delicious gardens round about them bloomed,
Streams wandered wild and musky thickets stretched,
With many a bright pavilion and fair lawn
In midst of which Siddartha strayed at will,
Some new delight provided every hour;
And happy hours he knew, for life was rich,
With youthful blood at quickest; yet still came
The shadows of his meditation back,
As the lake's silver dulls with driving clouds.

Which the King marking, called his Ministers:
“Bethink ye, sirs I how the old Rishi spake,”
He said, “and what my dream-readers foretold.
This boy, more dear to me than mine heart's blood,
Shall be of universal dominance,
Trampling the neck of all his enemies,
A King of kings—and this is in my heart;—
Or he shall tread the sad and lowly path
Of self-denial and of pious pains,
Gaining who knows what good, when all is lost
Worth keeping; and to this his wistful eyes
Do still incline amid my palaces.
But ye are sage, and ye will counsel me;
How may his feet be turned to that proud road
Where they should walk, and all fair signs come true
Which gave him Earth to rule, if he would rule?”

The eldest answered, “Maharaja! love
Will cure these thin distempers; weave the spell

Of woman's wiles about his idle heart.
What knows this noble boy of beauty yet,
Eyes that make heaven forgot, and lips of balm?
Find him soft wives and pretty playfellows;
The thoughts ye cannot stay with brazen chains
A girl's hair lightly binds.”

And all thought good,
But the King answered, “if we seek him wives,
Love chooseth oftentimes with another eye;
And if we bid range Beauty's garden round,
To pluck what blossom pleases, he will smile
And sweetly shun the joy he knows not of.”
Then said another, “Roams the barasingh
Until the fated arrow flies; for him,
As for less lordly spirits, some one charms,
Some face will seem a Paradise, some form
Fairer than pale Dawn when she wakes the world.
This do, my King! Command a festival
Where the realm's maids shall be competitors
In youth and grace, and sports that Sakyas use.
Let the Prince give the prizes to the fair,
And, when the lovely victors pass his seat,
There shall be those who mark if one or two
Change the fixed sadness of his tender cheek;
So we may choose for Love with Love's own eyes,
And cheat his Highness into happiness.”
This thing seemed good; wherefore upon a day
The criers bade the young and beautiful
Pass to the palace, for 't was in command
To hold a court of pleasure, and the Prince
Would give the prizes, something rich for all,
The richest for the fairest judged. So flocked
Kapilavastu's maidens to the gate,
Each with her dark hair newly smoothed and bound,
Eyelashes lusted with the soorma-stick,
Fresh-bathed and scented; all in shawls and cloths
Of gayest; slender hands and feet new-stained
With crimson, and the tilka-spots stamped bright.
Fair show it was of all those Indian girls

Slow-pacing past the throne with large black eyes
Fixed on the ground, for when they saw the Prince
More than the awe of Majesty made beat
Their fluttering hearts, he sate so passionless,
Gentle, but so beyond them. Each maid took
With down-dropped lids her gift, afraid to gaze;
And if the people hailed some lovelier one
Beyond her rivals worthy royal smiles,
She stood like a scared antelope to touch
The gracious hand, then fled to join her mates
Trembling at favour, so divine he seemed,
So high and saint-like and above her world.
Thus filed they, one bright maid after another,
The city's flowers, and all this beauteous march
Was ending and the prizes spent, when last
Came young Yasodhara, and they that stood
Nearest Siddartha saw the princely boy
Start, as the radiant girl approached. A form
Of heavenly mould; a gait like Parvati's; the
Eyes like a hind's in love-time, face so fair
Words cannot paint its spell; and she alone
Gazed full-folding her palms across her breasts
On the boy's gaze, her stately neck unbent.
“Is there a gift for me?” she asked, and smiled.
“The gifts are gone,” the Prince replied, “yet take
This for amends, dear sister, of whose grace
Our happy city boasts;” therewith he loosed
The emerald necklet from his throat, and clasped
Its green beads round her dark and silk-soft waist;
And their eyes mixed, and from the look sprang love.

Long after—when enlightenment was full—
Lord Buddha—being prayed why thus his heart
Took fire at first glance of the Sakya girl,
Answered, “We were not strangers, as to us
And all it seemed; in ages long gone by
A hunter's son, playing with forest girls
By Yamun's spring, where Nandadevi stands,
Sate umpire while they raced beneath the firs
Like hares at eve that run their playful rings;

One with flower-stars crowned he, one with long plumes
Plucked from eyed pheasant and the junglecock,
One with fir-apples; but who ran the last
Came first for him, and unto her the boy
Gave a tame fawn and his heart's love beside.
And in the wood they lived many glad years,
And in the wood they undivided died.
Lo! as hid seed shoots after rainless years,
So good and evil, pains and pleasures, hates
And loves, and all dead deeds, come forth again
Bearing bright leaves or dark, sweet fruit or sour.
Thus I was he and she Yasodhara;
And while the wheel of birth and death turns round,
That which hath been must be between us two.”

But they who watched the Prince at prize-giving
Saw and heard all, and told the careful King
How sate Siddrtha heedless till there passed
Great Suprabuddha's child, Yasodhara;
And how—at sudden sight of her—he changed,
And how she gazed on him and he on her,
And of the jewel-gift, and what beside
Passed in their speaking glance.

The fond King smiled:

“Look! we have found a lure; take counsel now
To fetch therewith our falcon from the clouds.
Let messengers be sent to ask the maid
In marriage for my son.” But it was law
With Sakyas, when any asked a maid
Of noble house, fair and desirable,
He must make good his skill in martial arts
Against all suitors who should challenge it;
Nor might this custom break itself for kings.
Therefore her father spake: “Say to the King,
The child is sought by princes far and near;
If thy most gentle son can bend the bow,
Sway sword, and back a horse better than they,
Best would he be in all and best to us
But how shall this be, with his cloistered ways?”

Then the King's heart was sore, for now the Prince
Begged sweet Yasodhara for wife—in vain,
With Devadatta foremost at the bow,
Ardjuna master of all fiery steeds,
And Nanda chief in sword-play; but the Prince
Laughed low and said, “These things, too, I
have learned;
Make proclamation that thy son will meet
All comers at their chosen games. I think
I shall not lose my love for such as these.”
So 't was given forth that on the seventh day
The Prince Siddartha summoned whoso would
To match with him in feats of manliness,
The victor's crown to be Yasodhara.

Therefore, upon the seventh day, there went
The Sakya lords and town and country round
Unto the maidan; and the maid went too
Amid her kinsfolk, carried as a bride,
With music, and with litters gaily dight,
And gold-horned oxen, flower-caparisoned.
Whom Devadatta claimed, of royal line,
And Nanda and Ardjuna, noble both,
The flower of all youths there, till the Prince came
Riding his white horse Kantaka, which neighed,
Astonished at this great strange world without
Also Siddartha gazed with wondering eyes
On all those people born beneath the throne,
Otherwise housed than kings, otherwise fed,
And yet so like—perchance—in joys and griefs.
But when the Prince saw sweet Yasodhara,
Brightly he smiled, and drew his silken rein,
Leaped to the earth from Kantaka's broad back,
And cried, “He is not worthy of this pearl
Who is not worthiest; let my rivals prove
If I have dared too much in seeking her.”
Then Nanda challenged for the arrow-test
And set a brazen drum six gows away,
Ardjuna six and Devadatta eight;
But Prince Siddartha bade them set his drum

Ten gows from off the line, until it seemed
A cownry-shell for target. Then they loosed,
And Nanda pierced his drum, Ardjuna his,
And Devadatta drove a well-aimed shaft
Through both sides of his mark, so that the crowd
Marvelled and cried; and sweet Yasodhara
Dropped the gold sari o'er her fearful eyes,
Lest she should see her Prince's arrow fail.
But he, taking their bow of lacquered cane,
With sinews bound, and strung with silver wire,
Which none but stalwart arms could draw a span,
Thrummed it—low laughing—drew the twisted string
Till the horns kissed, and the thick belly snapped
“That is for play, not love,” he said; “hath none
A bow more fit for Sakya lords to use?”
And one said, “There is Sinhahanu's bow,
Kept in the temple since we know not when,
Which none can string, nor draw if it be strung.”
“Fetch me,” he cried, “that weapon of a man!”
They brought the ancient bow, wrought of black steel,
Laid with gold tendrils on its branching curves
Like bison-horns; and twice Siddartha tried
Its strength across his knee, then spake “Shoot now
With this, my cousins!” but they could not bring
The stubborn arms a hand's-breadth nigher use;
Then the Prince, lightly leaning, bent the bow,
Slipped home the eye upon the notch, and twanged
Sharply the cord, which, like an eagle's wing
Thrilling the air, sang forth so clear and loud
That feeble folk at home that day inquired
“What is this sound?” and people answered them,
“It is the sound of Sinhahanu's bow,
Which the King's son has strung and goes to shoot;”
Then fitting fair a shaft, he drew and loosed,
And the keen arrow clove the sky, and drave
Right through that farthest drum, nor stayed its flight,
But skimmed the plain beyond, past reach of eye.

Then Devadatta challenged with the sword,
And clove a Talas-tree six fingers thick;

Ardjuna seven; and Nanda cut through nine;
But two such stems together grew, and both
Siddartha's blade shred at one flashing stroke,
Keen, but so smooth that the straight trunks upstood,
And Nanda cried, "His edge turned!" and the maid
Trembled anew seeing the trees erect,
Until the Devas of the air, who watched,
Blew light breaths from the south, and both green crowns
Crashed in the sand, clean-felled.

Then brought they steeds,
High-mettled, nobly-bred, and three times scoured
Around the maidan, but white Kantaka
Left even the fleetest far behind—so swift,
That ere the foam fell from his mouth to earth
Twenty spear-lengths he flew; but Nanda said,
"We too might win with such as Kantaka;
Bring an unbroken horse, and let men see
Who best can back him." So the syces brought
A stallion dark as night, led by three chains,
Fierce-eyed, with nostrils wide and tossing mane,
Unshod, unsaddled, for no rider yet
Had crossed him. Three times each young Sakya
Sprang to his mighty back, but the hot steed
Furiously reared, and flung them to the plain
In dust and shame; only Ardjuna held
His seat awhile, and, bidding loose the chains,
Lashed the black flank, and shook the bit, and held
The proud jaws fast with grasp of master-hand,
So that in storms of wrath and rage and fear
The savage stallion circled once the plain
Half-tamed; but sudden turned with naked teeth,
Gripped by the foot Ardjuna, tore him down,
And would have slain him, but the grooms ran in,
Fettering the maddened beast. Then all men cried,
"Let not Siddartha meddle with this Bhut,
Whose liver is a tempest, and his blood
Red flame;" but the Prince said, "Let go the chains,
Give me his forelock only," which he held
With quiet grasp, and, speaking some low word,

Laid his right palm across the stallion's eyes,
And drew it gently down the angry face,
And all along the neck and panting flanks,
Till men astonished saw the night-black horse
Sink his fierce crest and stand subdued and meek,
As though he knew our Lord and worshipped him.
Nor stirred he while Siddartha mounted, then
Went soberly to touch of knee and rein
Before all eyes, so that the people said,
“Strive no more, for Siddartha is the best.”

And all the suitors answered “He is best!”
And Suprabuddha, father of the maid,
Said, “It was in our hearts to find thee best,
Being dearest, yet what magic taught thee more
Of manhood 'mid thy rose-bowers and thy dreams
Than war and chase and world's work bring to these?
But wear, fair Prince, the treasure thou halt won.”
Then at a word the lovely Indian girl
Rose from her place above the throng, and took
A crown of mogra-flowers and lightly drew
The veil of black and gold across her brow,
Proud pacing past the youths, until she came
To where Siddartha stood in grace divine,
New lighted from the night-dark steed, which bent
Its strong neck meekly underneath his arm.
Before the Prince lowly she bowed, and bared
Her face celestial beaming with glad love;
Then on his neck she hung the fragrant wreath,
And on his breast she laid her perfect head,
And stooped to touch his feet with proud glad eyes,
Saying, “Dear Prince, behold me, who am thine!”
And all the throng rejoiced, seeing them pass
Hand fast in hand, and heart beating with heart,
The veil of black and gold drawn close again.

Long after—when enlightenment was come—
They prayed Lord Buddha touching all, and why
She wore this black and gold, and stepped so proud.
And the World-honoured answered, “Unto me

This was unknown, albeit it seemed half known;
For while the wheel of birth and death turns round,
Past things and thoughts, and buried lives come back.
I now remember, myriad rains ago,
What time I roamed Himala's hanging woods,
A tiger, with my striped and hungry kind;
I, who am Buddh, couched in the kusa grass
Gazing with green blinked eyes upon the herds
Which pastured near and nearer to their death
Round my day-lair; or underneath the stars
I roamed for prey, savage, insatiable,
Sniffing the paths for track of man and deer.
Amid the beasts that were my fellows then,
Met in deep jungle or by reedy jheel,
A tigress, comeliest of the forest, set
The males at war; her hide was lit with gold,
Black-broidered like the veil Yasodhara
Wore for me; hot the strife waged in that wood
With tooth and claw, while underneath a neem
The fair beast watched us bleed, thus fiercely wooed.
And I remember, at the end she came
Snarling past this and that torn forest-lord
Which I had conquered, and with fawning jaws
Licked my quick-heaving flank, and with me went
Into the wild with proud steps, amorously.
The wheel of birth and death turns low and high.”

Therefore the maid was given unto the Prince
A willing spoil; and when the stars were good—
Mesha, the Red Ram, being Lord of heaven—
The marriage feast was kept, as Sakyas use,
The golden gadi set, the carpet spread,
The wedding garlands hung, the arm-threads tied,
The sweet cake broke, the rice and attar thrown,
The two straws floated on the reddened milk,
Which, coming close, betokened “love till death;”
The seven steps taken thrice around the fire,
The gifts bestowed on holy men, the alms
And temple offerings made, the mantras sung,
The garments of the bride and bridegroom tied.

Then the grey father spake: "Worshipful Prince,
She that was ours henceforth is only thine;
Be good to her, who hath her life in thee."
Wherewith they brought home sweet Yasodhara,
With songs and trumpets, to the Prince's arms,
And love was all in all.

Yet not to love

Alone trusted the King; love's prison-house
Stately and beautiful he bade them build,
So that in all the earth no marvel was
Like Vishramvan, the Prince's pleasure-place.
Midway in those wide palace-grounds there rose
A verdant hill whose base Rohini bathed,
Murmuring adown from Himalay's broad feet,
To bear its tribute into Gunga's waves.
Southward a growth of tamarind trees and sal,
Thick set with pale sky-coloured ganthi flowers,
Shut out the world, save if the city's hum
Came on the wind no harsher than when bees
Hum out of sight in thickets. Northward soared
The stainless ramps of huge Hamala's wall,
Ranged in white ranks against the blue-untrod
Infinite, wonderful—whose uplands vast,
And lifted universe of crest and crag,
Shoulder and shelf, green slope and icy horn,
Riven ravine, and splintered precipice
Led climbing thought higher and higher, until
It seemed to stand in heaven and speak with gods.
Beneath the snows dark forests spread, sharp laced
With leaping cataracts and veiled with clouds
Lower grew rose-oaks and the great fir groves
Where echoed pheasant's call and panther's cry
Clatter of wild sheep on the stones, and scream
Of circling eagles: under these the plain
Gleamed like a praying-carpet at the foot
Of those divinest altars. 'Fronting this
The builders set the bright pavilion up,
'Fair-planted on the terraced hill, with towers
On either flank and pillared cloisters round.

Its beams were carved with stories of old time—
Radha and Krishna and the sylvan girls—
Sita and Hanuman and Draupadi;
And on the middle porch God Ganesha,
With disc and hook—to bring wisdom and wealth—
Propitious sate, wreathing his sidelong trunk.
By winding ways of garden and of court
The inner gate was reached, of marble wrought,
White with pink veins; the lintel lazuli,
The threshold alabaster, and the doors
Sandalwood, cut in pictured panelling;
Whereby to lofty halls and shadowy bowers
Passed the delighted foot, on stately stairs,
Through latticed galleries, 'neath painted roofs
And clustering columns, where cool fountains—fringed
With lotus and nelumbo—danced, and fish
Gleamed through their crystal, scarlet, gold, and blue.
Great-eyed gazelles in sunny alcoves browsed
The blown red roses; birds of rainbow wing
Fluttered among the palms; doves, green and grey,
Built their safe nests on gilded cornices;
Over the shining pavements peacocks drew
The splendours of their trains, sedately watched
By milk-white herons and the small house-owls.
The plum-necked parrots swung from fruit to fruit;
The yellow sunbirds whirred from bloom to bloom,
The timid lizards on the lattice basked
Fearless, the squirrels ran to feed from hand,
For all was peace: the shy black snake, that gives
Fortune to households, sunned his sleepy coils
Under the moon-flowers, where the musk-deer played,
And brown-eyed monkeys chattered to the crows.
And all this house of love was peopled fair
With sweet attendance, so that in each part
With lovely sights were gentle faces found,
Soft speech and willing service, each one glad
To gladden, pleased at pleasure, proud to obey;
Till life glided beguiled, like a smooth stream
Banked by perpetual flowers, Yasodhara

Queen of the enchanting Court.

But innermost,
Beyond the richness of those hundred halls,
A secret chamber lurked, where skill had spent
All lovely fantasies to lull the mind.
The entrance of it was a cloistered square—
Roofed by the sky, and in the midst a tank—
Of milky marble built, and laid with slabs
Of milk-white marble; bordered round the tank
And on the steps, and all along the frieze
With tender inlaid work of agate-stones.
Cool as to tread in summer-time on snows
It was to loiter there; the sunbeams dropped
Their gold, and, passing into porch and niche,
Softened to shadows, silvery, pale, and dim,
As if the very Day paused and grew Eve.
In love and silence at that bower's gate;
For there beyond the gate the chamber was,
Beautiful, sweet; a wonder of the world!
Soft light from perfumed lamps through windows fell
Of nakre and stained stars of lucent film
On golden cloths outspread, and silken beds,
And heavy splendour of the purdah's fringe,
Lifted to take only the loveliest in.
Here, whether it was night or day none knew,
For always streamed that softened light, more bright
Than sunrise, but as tender as the eve's;
And always breathed sweet airs, more joy-giving
Than morning's, but as cool as midnight's breath;
And night and day lutes sighed, and night and day
Delicious foods were spread, and dewy fruits,
Sherbets new chilled with snows of Himalay,
And sweetmeats made of subtle daintiness,
With sweet tree-milk in its own ivory cup.
And night and day served there a chosen band
Of nautch girls, cup-bearers, and cymballers,
Delicate, dark-browed ministers of love,
Who fanned the sleeping eyes of the happy Prince,
And when he waked, led back his thoughts to bliss

With music whispering through the blooms, and charm
Of amorous songs and dreamy dances, linked
By chime of ankle-bells and wave of arms
And silver vina-strings; while essences
Of musk and champak and the blue haze spread
From burning spices soothed his soul again
To drowse by sweet Yasodhara; and thus
Siddartha lived forgetting.

Furthermore,
The King commanded that within those walls
No mention should be made of death or age,
Sorrow, or pain, or sickness. If one drooped
In the lovely Court—her dark glance dim, her feet
Faint in the dance—the guiltless criminal
Passed forth an exile from that Paradise,
Lest he should see and suffer at her woe.
Bright-eyed intendants watched to execute
Sentence on such as spake of the harsh world
Without, where aches and plagues were, tears
and fears,
And wail of mourners, and grim fume of pyres.
'T was treason if a thread of silver strayed
In tress of singing-girl or nautch-dancer;
And every dawn the dying rose was plucked,
The dead leaves hid, all evil sights removed
For said the King, "If he shall pass his youth
Far from such things as move to wistfulness,
And brooding on the empty eggs of thought,
The shadow of this fate, too vast for man,
May fade, belike, and I shall see him grow
To that great stature of fair sovereignty
When he shall rule all lands—if he will rule—
The King of kings and glory of his time."

Wherefore, around that pleasant prison house
Where love was gaoler and delights its bars,
But far removed from sight—the King bade build
A massive wall, and in the wall a gate
With brazen folding-doors, which but to roll

Back on their hinges asked a hundred arms;
Also the noise of that prodigious gate
Opening was heard full half a yojana.
And inside this another gate he made,
And yet within another—through the three
Must one pass if he quit that pleasure-house.
Three mighty gates there were, bolted and barred,
And over each was set a faithful watch;
And the King's order said, “Suffer no man
To pass the gates, though he should be the Prince
This on your lives—even though it be my son.”



Book The Third

In which calm home of happy life and love
Lagged our Lord Buddha, knowing not of woe,
Nor want, nor pain, nor plague, nor age, nor death,
Save as when sleepers roam dim seas in dreams,
And land awearied on the shores of day,
Bringing strange merchandise from that black voyage.
Thus oft-times when he lay with gentle head
Lulled on the dark breasts of Yasodhara,
Her fond hands fanning slow his sleeping lids,
He would start up and cry, "My world! Oh, world!
I hear! I know! I come!" And she would ask,
"What ails my Lord?" with large eyes terrorstruck;
For at such times the pity in his look
Was awful, and his visage like a god's.
Then would he smile again to stay her tears,
And bid the vinas sound; but once they set
A stringed gourd on the sill, there where the wind
Could linger o'er its notes and play at will—
Wild music makes the wind on silver strings—
And those who lay around heard only that;
But Prince Siddhartha heard the Devas play,
And to his ears they sang such words as these:—

We are the voices of the wandering wind,
Which moan for rest and rest can never find;
Lo! as the wind is so is mortal life,
A moan, a sigh, a sob, a storm, a strife.

Wherefore and whence we are ye cannot know,
Nor where life springs nor whither life doth go;
We are as ye are, ghosts from the inane,
What pleasure have we of our changeful pain?

What pleasure hast thou of thy changeless bliss?
Nay, if love lasted, there were joy in this;
But life's way is the wind's way, all these things
Are but brief voices breathed on shifting strings.

O Maya's son! because we roam the earth
Moan we upon these strings; we make no mirth,
So many woes we see in many lands,
So many streaming eyes and wringing hands.

Yet mock we while we wail, for, could they know,
This life they cling to is but empty show;
'Twere all as well to bid a cloud to stand,
Or hold a running river with the hand.

But thou that art to save, thine hour is nigh!
The sad world walleth in its misery,
The blind world stumbleth on its round of pain;
Rise, Maya's child! wake! slumber not again!

We are the voices of the wandering wind
Wander thou, too, O Prince, thy rest to find;
Leave love for love of lovers, for woe's sake
Quit state for sorrow, and deliverance make.

So sigh we, passing o'er the silver strings,
To thee who know'st not yet of earthly things;
So say we; mocking, as we pass away,
These lovely shadows wherewith thou dost play.

Thereafter it befell he sate at eve
Amid his beauteous Court, holding the hand
Of sweet Yasodhara, and some maid told—
With breaks of music when her rich voice dropped—
An ancient tale to speed the hour of dusk,
Of love, and of a magic horse, and lands
Wonderful, distant, where pale peoples dwelled
And where the sun at night sank into seas.
Then spake he, sighing, “Chitra brings me back.
The wind's song in the strings with that fair tale.
Give her, Yasodhara, thy pearl for thanks.
But thou, my pearl! is there so wide a world?
Is there a land which sees the great sun roll
Into the waves, and are there hearts like ours,
Countless, unknown, not happy—it may be—

Whom we might succour if we knew of them?
Ofttimes I marvel, as the Lord of day
Treads from the east his kingly road of gold,
Who first on the world's edge hath hailed his beam,
The children of the morning; oftentimes,
Even in thine arms and on thy breasts, bright wife,
Sore have I panted, at the sun's decline,
To pass with him into that crimson west
And see the peoples of the evening.
There must be many we should love—how else?
Now have I in this hour an ache, at last,
Thy soft lips cannot kiss away: oh, girl!
O Chitra! you that know of fairyland!
Where tether they that swift steed of the tale?
My palace for one day upon his back,
To ride and ride and see the spread of the earth!
Nay, if I had yon callow vulture's plumes—
The carrion heir of wider realms than mine—
How would I stretch for topmost Himalay,
Light where the rose-gleam lingers on those snows,
And strain my gaze with searching what is round!
Why have I never seen and never sought?
Tell me what lies beyond our brazen gates.”

Then one replied, “The city first, fair Prince!
The temples, and the gardens, and the groves,
And then the fields, and afterwards fresh fields,
With nullahs, maidans, jungle, koss on koss;
And next King Bimbasara's realm, and then
The vast flat world, with crores on crores of folk.”
“Good,” said Siddartha, “let the word be sent
That Channa yoke my chariot—at noon
Tomorrow I shall ride and see beyond.”

Whereof they told the King: “Our Lord, thy son,
Wills that his chariot be yoked at noon,
That he may ride abroad and see mankind.”

“Yea!” spake the careful King, “’tis time he see!
But let the criers go about and bid

My city deck itself, so there be met
No noisome sight; and let none blind or maimed,
None that is sick or stricken deep in years,
No leper, and no feeble folk come forth.”
Therefore the stones were swept, and up and down
The water-carriers sprinkled all the streets
From spirting skins, the housewives scattered fresh
Red powder on their thresholds, strung new wreaths,
And trimmed the tulsi-bush before their doors.
The paintings on the walls were heightened up
With liberal brush, the trees set thick with flags,
The idols gilded; in the four-went ways
Suryadeva and the great gods shone
'Mid shrines of leaves; so that the city seemed
A capital of some enchanted land.
Also the criers passed, with drum and gong,
Proclaiming loudly, “Ho! all citizens,
The King commands that there be seen today
No evil sight: let no one blind or maimed,
None that is sick or stricken deep in years,
No leper, and no feeble folk go forth.
Let none, too, burn his dead nor bring them out
Till nightfall. Thus Suddhodana commands.”

So all was comely and the houses trim
Throughout Kapilavastu, while the Prince
Came forth in painted car, which two steers drew,
Snow-white, with swinging dewlaps and huge humps
Wrinkled against the carved and lacquered yoke.
Goodly it was to mark the people's joy
Greeting their Prince; and glad. Siddartha waxed
At sight of all those liege and friendly folk
Bright-clad and laughing as if life were good.
“Fair is the world,” he said, “it likes me well!
And light and kind these men that are not kings,
And sweet my sisters here, who toil and tend;
What have I done for these to make them thus?
Why, if I love them, should those children know?
I pray take up yon pretty Sakya boy
Who flung us flowers, and let him ride with me.

How good it is to reign in realms like this!
How simple pleasure is, if these be pleased
Because I come abroad! How many things
I need not if such little households hold
Enough to make our city full of smiles!
Drive, Channa! through the gates, and let me see
More of this gracious world I have not known.”

So passed they through the gates, a joyous crowd
Thronging about the wheels, whereof some ran
Before the oxen, throwing wreaths, some stroked
Their silken flanks, some brought them rice and cakes,
All crying, “Jai! jai! for our noble Prince!”
Thus all the path was kept with gladsome looks
And filled with fair sights—for the King’s word was
That such should be—when midway in the road,
Slow tottering from the hovel where he hid,
Crept forth a wretch in rags, haggard and foul,
An old, old man, whose shrivelled skin, suntanned,
Clung like a beast’s hide to his fleshless bones.
Bent was his back with load of many days,
His eyepits red with rust of ancient tears,
His dim orbs blear with rheum, his toothless jaws
Wagging with palsy and the fright to see
So many and such joy. One skinny hand
Clutched a worn staff to prop his quavering limbs,
And one was pressed upon the ridge of ribs
Whence came in gasps the heavy painful breath.
“Alms!” moaned he, “give, good people! for I die
Tomorrow or the next day!” then the cough
Choked him, but still he stretched his palm, and stood
Blinking, and groaning 'mid his spasms, “Alms!”
Then those around had wrenched his feeble feet
Aside, and thrust him from the road again,
Saying, “The Prince! dost see? get to thy lair!”
But that Siddartha cried, “Let be! let be!
Channa! what thing is this who seems a man,
Yet surely only seems, being so bowed,
So miserable, so horrible, so sad?
Are men born sometimes thus? What meaneth he

Moaning 'tomorrow or next day I die?'
Finds he no food that so his bones jut forth?
What woe hath happened to this piteous one?"
Then answer made the charioteer, "Sweet Prince!
This is no other than an aged man.
Some fourscore years ago his back was straight,
His eye bright, and his body goodly: now
The thievish years have sucked his sap away,
Pillaged his strength and filched his will and wit;
His lamp has lost its oil, the wick burns black;
What life he keeps is one poor lingering spark
Which flickers for the finish: such is age;
Why should your Highness heed?"
Then spake the Prince
"But shall this come to others, or to all,
Or is it rare that one should be as he?"
"Most noble," answered Channa, "even as he,
Will all these grow if they shall live so long."
"But," quoth the Prince, "if I shall live as long
Shall I be thus; and if Yasodhara
Live fourscore years, is this old age for her,
Jalini, little Hasta, Gautami,
And Gunga, and the others?" "Yea, great Sir!"
The charioteer replied. Then spake the Prince
"Turn back, and drive me to my house again!
I have seen that I did not think to see."

Which pondering, to his beauteous Court returned
Wistful Siddartha, sad of mien and mood;
Nor tasted he the white cakes nor the fruits
Spread for the evening feast, nor once looked up
While the best palace-dancers strove to charm
Nor spake—save one sad thing—when wofully
Yasodhara sank to his feet and wept,
Sighing, "Hath not my Lord comfort in me?"
"Ah, Sweet!" he said, "such comfort that my soul
Aches, thinking it must end, for it will end,
And we shall both grow old, Yasodhara!
Loveless, unlovely, weak, and old, and bowed.
Nay, though we locked up love and life with lips

So close that night and day our breaths grew one
Time would thrust in between to filch away
My passion and thy grace, as black Night steals
The rose-gleams from you peak, which fade to grey
And are not seen to fade. This have I found,
And all my heart is darkened with its dread,
And all my heart is fixed to think how Love
Might save its sweetness from the slayer, Time,
Who makes men old.” So through that night he sate
Sleepless, uncomforted.

And all that night
The King Suddhodana dreamed troublous dreams.
The first fear of his vision was a flag
Broad, glorious, glistening with a golden sun,
The mark of Indra; but a strong wind blew,
Rending its folds divine, and dashing it
Into the dust; whereat a concourse came
Of shadowy Ones, who took the spoiled silk up
And bore it eastward from the city gates.
The second fear was ten huge elephants,
With silver tusks and feet that shook the earth,
Trampling the southern road in mighty march;
And he who sate upon the foremost beast
Was the King's son—the others followed him.
The third fear of the vision was a car,
Shining with blinding light, which four steeds drew,
Snorting white smoke and champing fiery foam;
And in the car the Prince Siddhartha sate.
The fourth fear was a wheel which turned and turned,
With nave of burning gold and jewelled spokes,
And strange things written on the binding tire,
Which seemed both fire and music as it whirled.
The fifth fear was a mighty drum, set down
Midway between the city and the hills,
On which the Prince beat with an iron mace,
So that the sound pealed like a thunderstorm,
Rolling around the sky and far away.
The sixth fear was a tower, which rose and rose
High o'er the city till its stately head

Shone crowned with clouds, and on the top the Prince
Stood, scattering from both hands, this way and that,
Gems of most lovely light, as if it rained
Jacynths and rubies; and the whole world came,
Striving to seize those treasures as they fell
Towards the four quarters. But the seventh fear was
A noise of wailing, and behold six men
Who wept and gnashed their teeth, and laid their palms
Upon their mouths, walking disconsolate.

These seven fears made the vision of his sleep,
But none of all his wisest dream-readers
Could tell their meaning. Then the King was wroth,
Saying, "There cometh evil to my house,
And none of ye have wit to help me know
What the great gods portend sending me this."
So in the city men went sorrowful
Because the King had dreamed seven signs of fear
Which none could read; but to the gate there came
An aged man, in robe of deer-skin clad,
By guise a hermit, known to none; he cried,
"Bring me before the King, for I can read
The vision of his sleep"; who, when he heard
The sevenfold mysteries of the midnight dream,
Bowed reverent and said: "O Maharaj!
I hail this favoured House, whence shall arise
A wider-reaching splendour than the sun's!
Lo! all these seven fears are seven joys,
Whereof the first, where thou didst see a flag—
Broad, glorious, gilt with Indra's badge—cast down
And carried out, did signify the end
Of old faiths and beginning of the new,
For there is change with gods not less than men,
And as the days pass kalpas pass at length.
The ten great elephants that shook the earth
The ten great gifts of wisdom signify,
In strength whereof the Prince shall quit his state
And shake the world with passage of the Truth.
The four flame-breathing horses of the car
Are those four fearless virtues which shall bring

Thy son from doubt and gloom to gladsome light;
The wheel that turned with nave of burning gold
Was that most precious Wheel of perfect Law
Which he shall turn in sight of all the world.
The mighty drum whereon the Prince did beat,
Till the sound filled all lands, doth signify
The thunder of the preaching of the Word
Which he shall preach; the tower that grew to heaven
The growing of the Gospel of this Buddh
Sets forth; and those rare jewels scattered thence
The untold treasures are of that good Law
To gods and men dear and desirable.
Such is the interpretation of the tower;
But for those six men weeping with shut mouths,
They are the six chief teachers whom thy son
Shall, with bright truth and speech unanswerable,
Convince of foolishness. O King! rejoice;
The fortune of my Lord the Prince is more
Than kingdoms, and his hermit-rags will be
Beyond fine cloths of gold. This was thy dream!
And in seven nights and days these things shall fall.”
So spake the holy man, and lowly made
The eight prostrations, touching thrice the ground;
Then turned and passed; but when the King bade send

A rich gift after him, the messengers
Brought word, “We came to where he entered in
At Chandra's temple, but within was none
Save a grey owl which fluttered from the shrine.”
The gods come sometimes thus.

But the sad King
Marvelled, and gave command that new delights
Be compassed to enthrall Siddartha's heart
Amid those dancers of his pleasure-house,
Also he set at all the brazen doors
A doubled guard.

Yet who shall shut out Fate?

For once again the spirit of the Prince
Was moved to see this world beyond his gates,
This life of man, so pleasant if its waves
Ran not to waste and woful finishing
In Time's dry sands. "I pray you let me view
Our city as it is," such was his prayer
To King Suddhodana. "Your Majesty
In tender heed hath warned the folk before
To put away ill things and common sights,
And make their faces glad to gladden me,
And all the causeways gay; yet have I learned
This is not daily life, and if I stand
Nearest, my father, to the realm and thee,
Fain would I know the people and the streets,
Their simple usual ways, and workday deeds,
And lives which those men live who are not kings.
Give me good leave, dear Lord, to pass unknown
Beyond my happy gardens; I shall come
The more contented to their peace again,
Or wiser, father, if not well content.
Therefore, I pray thee, let me go at will
Tomorrow, with my servants, through the streets."
And the King said, among his Ministers
"Belike this second flight may mend the first.
Note how the falcon starts at every sight
New from his hood, but what a quiet eye
Cometh of freedom; let my son see all,
And bid them bring me tidings of his mind."

Thus on the morrow, when the noon was come,
The Prince and Channa passed beyond the gates,
Which opened to the signet of the King,
Yet knew not they who rolled the great doors back
It was the King's son in that merchant's robe,
And in the clerkly dress his charioteer.
Forth fared they by the common way afoot,
Mingling with all the Sakya citizens,
Seeing the glad and sad things of the town:
The painted streets alive with hum of noon,
The traders cross-legged 'mid their spice and grain,

“Yea, at the last comes death,
In whatsoever way, whatever hour.
Some few grow old, most suffer and fall sick,
But all must die—behold, where comes the Dead!”

Then did Siddartha raise his eyes, and see
Fast pacing towards the river brink a band
Of wailing people, foremost one who swung
An earthen bowl with lighted coals, behind
The kinsmen shorn, with mourning marks, ungirt,
Crying aloud, “O Rama, Rama, hear!
Call upon Rama, brothers”; next the bier,
Knit of four poles with bamboos interlaced,
Whereon lay, stark and stiff, feet foremost, lean,
Chapfallen, sightless, hollow-flanked, a-grin,
Sprinkled with red and yellow dust—the Dead,
Whom at the four-went ways they turned head first,
And crying “Rama, Rama!” carried on
To where a pile was reared beside the stream;
Thereon they laid him, building fuel up—
Good sleep hath one that slumbers on that bed!
He shall not wake for cold albeit he lies
Naked to all the airs—for soon they set
The red flame to the corners four, which crept,
And licked, and flickered, finding out his flesh
And feeding on it with swift hissing tongues,
And crackle of parched skin, and snap of joint;
Till the fat smoke thinned and the ashes sank
Scarlet and grey, with here and there a bone
White midst the grey—the total of the man.

Then spake the Prince, “Is this the end which comes
To all who live?”

“This is the end that comes
To all,” quoth Channa; “he upon the pyre—
Whose remnants are so petty that the crows
Caw hungrily, then quit the fruitless feast—
Ate, drank, laughed, loved, and lived, and liked

life well.

Then came—who knows?—some gust of junglewind,
A stumble on the path, a taint in the tank,
A snake's nip, half a span of angry steel,
A chill, a fishbone, or a falling tile,
And life was over and the man is dead.
No appetites, no pleasures, and no pains
Hath such; the kiss upon his lips is nought,
The fire-scorch nought; he smelleth not his flesh
A-roast, nor yet the sandal and the spice
They burn; the taste is emptied from his mouth,
The hearing of his ears is clogged, the sight
Is blinded in his eyes; those whom he loved
Wail desolate, for even that must go,
The body, which was lamp unto the life,
Or worms will have a horrid feast of it.
Here is the common destiny of flesh.
The high and low, the good and bad, must die,
And then, 't is taught, begin anew and live
Somewhere, somehow,—who knows?—and so again
The pangs, the parting, and the lighted pile—
Such is man's round.”

But lo! Siddartha turned
Eyes gleaming with divine tears to the sky,
Eyes lit with heavenly pity to the earth;
From sky to earth he looked, from earth to sky,
As if his spirit sought in lonely flight
Some far-off vision, linking this and that,
Lost, past, but searchable, but seen, but known.
Then cried he, while his lifted countenance
Glowed with the burning passion of a love
Unspeakable, the ardour of a hope
Boundless, insatiate: “Oh! suffering world,
Oh! known and unknown of my common flesh,
Caught in this common net of death and woe,
And life which binds to both! I see, I feel
The vastness of the agony of earth,
The vainness of its joys, the mockery
Of all its best, the anguish of its worst;