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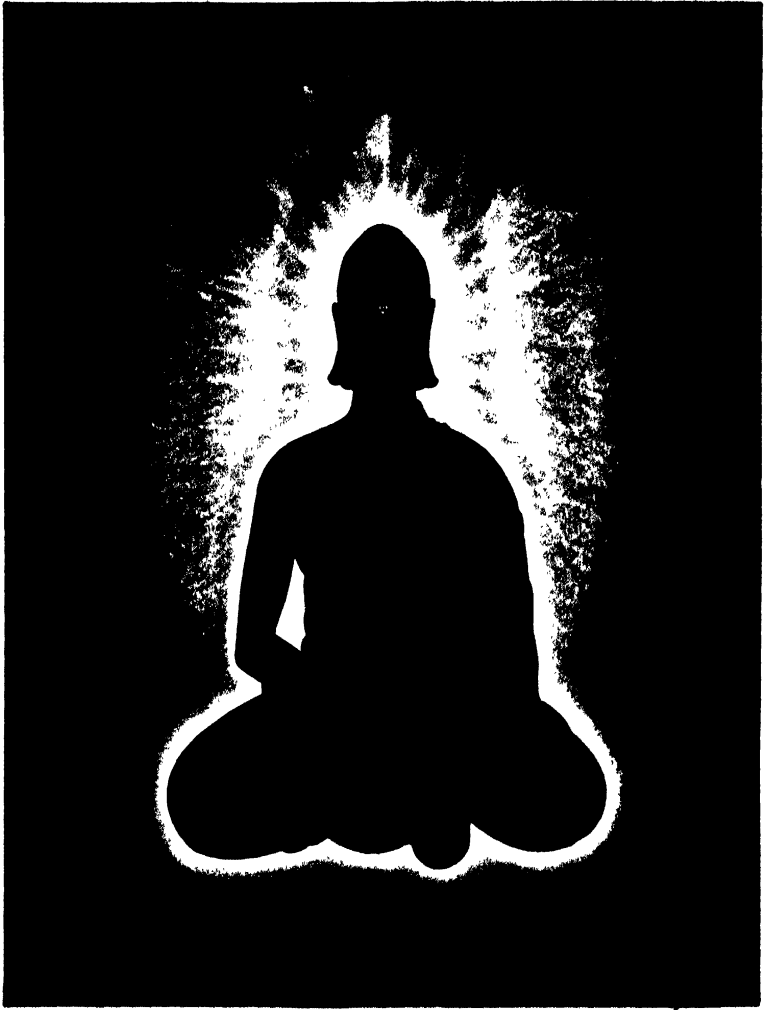
*THE LIGHT OF ASIA*

*Also Illustrated by Hamzeh Carr*

THE RUBÁIYÁT OF UMAR KHAIYÁM  
Done into English from the French of J. B.  
NICOLAS by FREDERIC BARON CORVO, together  
with a reprint of the French text. Edited, with  
notes, a comparative study of the original texts  
and an Introduction by EDWARD HERON-ALLEN,  
F.R.S. With sixteen illustrations in colour by  
HAMZEH CARR.

*The Bodley Head*









# THE LIGHT OF ASIA

BY SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

*A New Edition with Illustrations by*

HAMZEH CARR

*Introduction by*

SIR E. DENISON ROSS

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THIS VOLUME  
IS DUTIFULLY INSCRIBED TO  
THE SOVEREIGN,  
GRAND MASTER, AND COMPANIONS  
OF  
THE MOST EXALTED ORDER OF  
THE STAR OF INDIA  
BY  
THE AUTHOR



## INTRODUCTION

By Sir E. Denison Ross, C.I.E.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, the author of this work, was born at Gravesend in 1832. He was educated at King's School, Rochester, King's College, London, and University College, Oxford. In 1852 he took the Newdigate prize at Oxford, and in 1856 was appointed Principal of the Deccan College, Poona. In 1861 he became leader writer of the *Daily Telegraph*, and in 1873 chief editor. While holding this latter position he was responsible for the setting on foot of several missions, including that of H. M. Stanley in search of Livingstone. He died in 1904. He was a fine journalist, but it was as a poet that he desired recognition, and so great was his ambition in this direction that he is said to have expected that the Poet-Laureateship would revert to him on the death of Lord Tennyson in 1892, and this, in spite of the fact that since publishing *The Light of Asia* in 1879 he had produced nothing that was noteworthy in verse except *The Light of the World*, which fell altogether flat.

That *The Light of Asia*, with its unfamiliar setting, its strange names and its Sanskrit terminology should have met with an immediate success, is proof enough that the story was well told and that the poem had incontestable merit. The moral doctrines of the Buddha were those familiar to the West, but the Indian scenery and imagery were new to many, while the actual life of Gautama presented

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a figure of perfect virtue whose existence came to thousands of readers almost as a revelation. The work was quickly translated into all the principal languages of Europe, and there have been upwards of sixty editions in England and eighty editions in America. Though it has an assured place in every large library, it has not enjoyed any continued popularity, and is to-day probably very little read. This, I think, is to be regretted, for although the poetry is uneven in quality, it contains many passages of compelling beauty, and still remains the best description of the life of Gautama Buddha in our language.

It is interesting to consider how little the general reader could know of Buddhism and especially of the life of Gautama when *The Light of Asia* was written. Of *popular* works dealing with the life of the Buddha there was not one, and the learned works, for the most part buried away in Oriental journals, were by no means numerous; for nearly all the most important works on the subject have appeared since Edwin Arnold first set himself to tell in verse what few Europeans had attempted in prose. Of the later developments of Buddhism in China, Japan, Tibet, and Central Asia much had been told in well-known books of travel, whose writers, however, knew little or nothing of the Indian beginnings of Buddhism or of the life of the founder. Such books abounded in misconceptions and inaccuracies, though Buddhism generally escaped that wholesale abuse for so many centuries heaped upon Islam by Christian writers.

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In 1824, Brian Hodgson, our Resident in Nepal, announced to the learned world that he had discovered in the local monasteries the Sanskrit originals of the Buddhist Canon. The event may be compared with the discovery of the Hebrew Bible, supposing the Septuagint alone to have been known to scholars. Shortly after, Hodgson sent copies of some of these texts to London and Paris, and the patient, scholarly work immediately undertaken by the great French Orientalist Burnouf laid the first foundation of all subsequent researches into the origin of Buddhism. His translation of the *Lalita Vistara* gave to Europe the first complete Life of Gautama Buddha, and finally set at rest all the idle speculations as to the identity of this Hindu reformer, who had been identified in turn with Christ, Mani, Mercury, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, and even with Wotan.

A few years later the Pali Canon was discovered in Ceylon, and the story of Buddhism as taught and practised in that island resulted in the learned works of such men as Spence Hardy and Rhys Davids. In our own day, when so many popular books on Buddhism exist, it is difficult for us to realize how little was known in 1879, and how new a thing the life of the Buddha was to the first readers of Edwin Arnold's poem. Small wonder that it was eagerly sought after and read. To some, indeed, it came as a shock that, five centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, a man had preached all the essential virtues of Christianity, but had held out a totally different reward for those who practised them.

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For the performance of his task Edwin Arnold utilized all available sources, notably the works of Spence Hardy and Burnouf. While holding his professorship at Poona, he devoted some time to the study of Sanskrit, and though he probably was not scholar enough to read critically Buddhist Sanskrit works, his knowledge of the language enabled him to write and scan Indian names with accuracy, a circumstance which makes him almost unique among English poets who have dealt with Oriental subjects. FitzGerald was, of course, another notable exception, but Tom Moore, Byron, Shelley and Matthew Arnold—and we must not forget Marlowe—had no means of controlling their Oriental names, and gave classic immortality to many impossible forms.

In *The Light of Asia* the author confines his narrative to the episodes in the early life of Gautama immediately prior to his attainment of Buddhahood. He tells us nothing of this Buddha's former existences while he was qualifying for Buddhahood—and there had been twenty-four Buddhas before him, and there are others to come—which are contained in the 550 so-called Birth Stories, and describe episodes in the life of Gautama in various stages of existence.

The last sections of the poem are devoted to the teachings of the Buddha, and here Edwin Arnold has attempted the impossible task of epitomizing, so as to be intelligible to the general reader, the meaning of the Four Noble Truths, of the Eightfold Path that leads to enlightenment, and finally of

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Nirvâna. In view of the present-day vogue for Buddhism it may be profitable here to consider what Buddhism represents to the average man who has made no profound study of it, and wherein lie the chief causes of misunderstanding. I imagine that my average man pictures the Buddha as an inspired prophet who brought a divine message to a people steeped in idolatry; that this message was so universal in its application that it still has to-day much that is helpful and attractive to the Western mind. It is, however, difficult to form a clear view of the particular aspects of Buddhism which make this popular appeal and form the basis of Buddhist societies in the West and in America. In any case, Buddhism grafted on to a Christian upbringing, or supplanting it, must in the nature of things be something very different to primitive Buddhism, which was a reformed and purified Hinduism. There was nothing absolutely new to the Indians in the teaching of Gautama, and his message could only be intelligible in its original form to the Hindus. The changes he made were in either the cosmogony or the ritual of the Hindus, and could only appeal to those familiar with both. But long before any knowledge of either religion reached Europe, Buddhism had spread into a number of vast countries, peopled by men of utterly diverse races and traditions, and in each country it was moulded anew according to the genius of the people by whom it was adopted. It is necessary to explain here that in course of time there came to be two main branches of Buddhism, that of the 'Lesser



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Vehicle', the older branch, as practised in Siam, Burmah and Ceylon with Pali as its principal medium, and that of the 'Greater Vehicle', which prevails in China, Japan, Mongolia and Tibet. Though both these branches have a great deal of Canonical literature in common, the 'Greater Vehicle', as its name implies, is far wider in its scope and more universal in its appeal. Indeed, when comparing the two we seem face to face with two different dispensations, differing far more than, for example, Catholicism and Protestantism. For on the one hand we have a development of the Vedanta philosophy and of salvation from endless birth and re-birth, while on the other hand we have in the 'Lesser Vehicle' the promise of a heaven, which is to be gained, like Christian salvation, through faith and works. The psychology which lay at the root of the Buddha's teaching, though it received fresh treatment at the hands of those professing the 'Greater Vehicle', became the monopoly of the priesthood and was ignored by the people. In China and Japan, Gautama Buddha was no longer the sole object of worship, but found rivals in Amitābha Buddha with his two attendant saints Avalokiteshvara and Mahāstāma. The former of these saints, who is known to the Chinese as *Kwan Yin* and to the Japanese as *Kwannon*, has in popular belief and in art changed sex and become a woman, often bearing a child in her arms. These Far Eastern Buddhists have also evolved a Heaven known as the Pure Land, into which all will ultimately be received, though the virtuous will reach

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it sooner than the sinful. All this sounds a far cry from Hinduism, and yet there can be no question of a separate religion having arisen, nor can the many similarities in belief and in iconography, which bear such striking resemblance to those of the Christians, be at any stage directly traced to Christian influence; for they are all developments of certain features of the Buddhist Canon, and it matters not at all that the Pure Land doctrine is in flat contradiction to the non-soul theory expounded by the first Buddhists, who had in turn reconciled this theory with the Hindu belief in transmigration. *The Light of Asia*, however, is only concerned with the actual teaching of Gautama Buddha as handed down in the earliest records of the 'Lesser Vehicle' and not with the controversial literature which sprang from the interpretation of that teaching.

One word regarding Mr. Hamzeh Carr's illustrations. As in his *Omar Khayyám*, Mr. Carr has struck a distinctive note which pervades all his pictures. Here one may trace the influence of various schools of art to which Buddhism has given birth, notably, perhaps, that of the Ajanta paintings and that of the Tibetan banners. Symbolism and imagination combine with a deep feeling for Eastern culture, while over the whole series there presides a subdued tone which has been inspired by the underlying solemnity of the sorrowing Buddha. One feels in looking at these illustrations that the artist has been guided rather by the teachings of the modern school of theosophic Buddhists than by the mere study of primitive Buddhism or

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of the poem itself. At any rate, I feel convinced that the result will make a strong appeal to many enthusiasts, and if this edition succeeds in introducing Edwin Arnold's poem to a number of new readers, it will have served its purpose. There is no ostensible reason why *The Light of Asia* should have enjoyed only a temporary vogue. It is certainly good enough to deserve a lasting popularity, and it is hard to account for the fact that in recent years so few readers of poetry have even tested its merits.

In conclusion, a few words regarding the much-vexed question of Nirvâna may not be out of place. Edwin Arnold evidently held what may be termed the 'survivalist' view of Nirvâna. He says in his own Preface that 'a third of mankind would never have been brought to believe in blank abstractions, or in Nothingness as the issue and crown of Being.' Max Müller, writing in 1862, also held similar views. 'We cannot,' he says, 'bring ourselves to believe that the reformer of India, the teacher of so perfect a code of morality . . . should have cared much about speculations which he knew would either be misunderstood or not understood at all, by those whom he wished to benefit.'

There can, however, be no doubt that the idea of total annihilation after death did not come as an unwelcome thought to a people who regarded life as an unmixed evil, and believed in an endless series of births and re-births.

Hinduism is not a proselytising religion, otherwise it might have made almost the same appeal in the West as Buddhism. Rhys Davids has well said: 'It

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is to be regretted that some writers on Buddhism have been led away by their just admiration for the teaching of the noble Gautama into an unjust depreciation of the religious system of which his own was, after all, but the highest product and result. There were doubtless among the Brahmans uncompromising advocates of the worst privilegēs of caste, of the most debasing belief in the efficacy of rites and ceremonies. . . . But it is inaccurate to draw any hard and fast line between the Indian Buddhists and their countrymen of other faiths.'

It is easy to account for the fundamental pessimism of the Hindus, who pictured themselves as wandering without end from world to world, from existence to existence, and struggling for ever against the indomitable power of death. To begin again to die, is the only meaning of re-birth. Compared with such an outlook, the idea of finding one's destiny settled for all eternity, though this involved a loss of all consciousness, was indeed welcome. This was the deliverance from death. It was not so much the triumph over death, but the victory over the fear of death (Burnouf).

The doctrine of Karma, of metempsychosis, was already so deeply rooted in the popular conscience, that Buddhism has retained it, though it stood in the most glaring conflict with Buddhist psychology, *which denies the existence of the soul altogether*. All Hindu thinkers held that life was an unmixed evil; that there are, however, means of escaping from samsāra (re-birth and re-dying), but the Hindus are pessimists only half-way, for there is a remedy (Kern).

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Gautama taught that the way to attain the dreamless sleep of Nirvâna was to get rid of all desires, and this was to be achieved by understanding the Four Noble Truths. The chief reform he introduced was the abolition of sacrifices. He taught that there were better sacrifices to be made in the shape of giving alms and, best of all, in renouncing the world and becoming a monk. No better reward for virtue and renunciation could be found than unbounded peace and freedom from all consciousness.

E. DENISON ROSS

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN the following Poem I have sought, by the medium of an imaginary Buddhist votary, to depict the life and character and indicate the philosophy of that noble hero and reformer, Prince Gautama of India, the founder of Buddhism.

A generation ago little or nothing was known in Europe of this great faith of Asia, which had nevertheless existed during twenty-four centuries, and at this day surpasses, in the number of its followers and the area of its prevalence, any other form of creed. Four hundred and seventy millions of our race live and die in the tenets of Gautama; and the spiritual dominions of this ancient teacher extend, at the present time, from Nepal and Ceylon, over the whole Eastern Peninsula, to China, Japan, Thibet, Central Asia, Siberia, and even Swedish Lapland. India itself might fairly be included in this magnificent Empire of Belief; for though the profession of Buddhism has for the most part passed away from the land of its birth, the mark of Gautama's sublime teaching is stamped ineffaceably upon modern Brahmanism, and the most characteristic habits and convictions of the Hindus are clearly due to the benign influence of Buddha's precepts. More than a third of mankind, therefore, owe their moral and religious ideas to this illustrious prince, whose personality, though imperfectly revealed in the existing sources of information, cannot but appear the highest, gentlest, holiest, and most beneficent, with one exception, in the history of Thought. Discordant in frequent particulars, and sorely overlaid by

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corruptions, inventions, and misconceptions, the Buddhistical books yet agree in the one point of recording nothing—no single act or word—which mars the perfect purity and tenderness of this Indian teacher, who united the truest princely qualities with the intellect of a sage and the passionate devotion of a martyr. Even M. Barthélemy St. Hilaire, totally misjudging, as he does, many points of Buddhism, is well cited by Professor Max Müller as saying of Prince Siddârtha, ‘Sa vie n’a point de tache. Son constant héroïsme égale sa conviction; et si la théorie qu’il préconise est fausse, les exemples personnels qu’il donne sont irréprochables. Il est le modèle achevé de toutes les vertus qu’il prêche; son abnégation, sa charité, son inaltérable douceur ne se démentent point un seul instant. . . . Il prépare silencieusement sa doctrine par six années de retraite et de méditation; il la propage par la seule puissance de la parole et de la persuasion pendant plus d’un demi-siècle, et quand il meurt entre les bras de ses disciples, c’est avec la sérénité d’un sage qui a pratiqué le bien toute sa vie, et qui est assuré d’avoir trouvé le vrai.’ To Gautama has consequently been granted this stupendous conquest of humanity; and—though he discountenanced ritual, and declared himself, even when on the threshold of Nirvâna, to be only what all other men might become—the love and gratitude of Asia, disobeying his mandate, have given him fervent worship. Forests of flowers are daily laid upon his stainless shrines, and countless millions of lips daily repeat the formula ‘I take refuge in Buddha!’

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The Buddha of this poem—if, as need not be doubted, he really existed—was born on the borders of Nepaul about 620 B.C., and died about 543 B.C. at Kusinagara in Oudh. In point of age, therefore, most other creeds are youthful compared with this venerable religion, which has in it the eternity of a universal hope, the immortality of a boundless love, an indestructible element of faith in final good, and the proudest assertion ever made of human freedom. The extravagances which disfigure the record and practice of Buddhism are to be referred to that inevitable degradation which priesthoods always inflict upon great ideas committed to their charge. The power and sublimity of Gautama's original doctrines should be estimated by their influence, not by their interpreters; nor by that innocent but lazy and ceremonious Church which has arisen on the foundations of the Buddhistic Brotherhood or 'Sangha.'

I have put my poem into a Buddhist's mouth, because, to appreciate the spirit of Asiatic thoughts, they should be regarded from the Oriental point of view; and neither the miracles which consecrate this record, nor the philosophy which it embodies, could have been otherwise so naturally reproduced. The doctrine of Transmigration, for instance—startling to modern minds—was established and thoroughly accepted by the Hindus of Buddha's time; that period when Jerusalem was being taken by Nebuchadnezzar, when Nineveh was falling to the Medes, and Marseilles was founded by the Phocæans. The exposition here offered of so antique



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a system is of necessity incomplete, and—in obedience to the laws of poetic art—passes rapidly by many matters philosophically most important, as well as over the long ministry of Gautama. But my purpose has been obtained if any just conception be here conveyed of the lofty character of this noble prince, and of the general purport of his doctrines. As to these latter there has arisen prodigious controversy among the erudite, who will be aware that I have taken the imperfect Buddhistic citations much as they stand in Spence Hardy's work, and have also modified more than one passage in the received narratives. The views, however, here indicated of 'Nirvâna', 'Dharma', 'Karma', and the other chief features of Buddhism, are at least the fruits of considerable study, and also of a firm conviction that a third of mankind would never have been brought to believe in blank abstractions, or in Nothingness as the issue and crown of Being.

Finally, in reverence to the illustrious Promulgator of this *Light of Asia*, and in homage to the many eminent scholars who have devoted noble labours to his memory, for which both repose and ability are wanting to me, I beg that the shortcomings of my too-hurried study may be forgiven. It has been composed in the brief intervals of days without leisure, but is inspired by an abiding desire to aid in the better mutual knowledge of East and West. The time may come, I hope, when this book and my *Indian Song of Songs*, and *Indian Idylls*, will preserve the memory of one who loved India and the Indian peoples.

EDWIN ARNOLD

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*BOOK THE FIRST*





## BOOK THE FIRST

*THE Scripture of the Saviour of the World,  
Lord Buddha—Prince Siddârtha styled on earth—  
In Earth and Heavens and Hells Incomparable,  
All-honoured, Wisest, Best, most Pitiful;  
The Teacher of Nirvâna and the Law.*

Thus came he to be born again for men.

Below the highest sphere four Regents sit  
Who rule our world; and under them are zones  
Nearer, but high, where saintliest spirits dead  
Wait thrice ten thousand years, then live again;  
And on Lord Buddha, waiting in that sky,  
Came for our sakes the five sure signs of birth,  
So that the Devas knew the signs, and said  
'Buddha will go again to help the World.'  
'Yea!' spake He, 'now I go to help the World



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This last of many times; for birth and death  
End hence for me and those who learn my Law.  
I will go down among the Sâkyas,  
Under the southward snows of Himalay,  
Where pious people live and a just King.'

That night the wife of King Suddhâdana,  
Maya the Queen, asleep beside her Lord,  
Dreamed a strange dream; dreamed that a star from  
heaven—  
Splendid, six-rayed, in colour rosy-pearl,  
Whereof the token was an Elephant  
Six-tusked, and white as milk of Kamadhuk—  
Shot through the void; and, shining into her,  
Entered her womb upon the right. Awaked,  
Bliss beyond mortal mother's filled her breast,  
And over half the earth a lovely light  
Forewent the morn. The strong hills shook; the  
waves  
Sank lulled; all flowers that blow by day came forth  
As 'twere high noon; down to the farthest hells  
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,

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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 come—for all things knew—  
The conscious tree bent down its bows to make  
A bower about 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,

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By Nâgas 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 cast 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 Suddhâdana wist not of this;  
The portents troubled, till his dream-readers  
Augured a Prince of earthly dominance,  
A Chakravartî, 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 Istrî-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

*The King gave order that his town should  
keep high festival*







## BOOK THE FIRST

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 sandal-  
wood;  
Homage from tribute cities; so they called  
Their Prince Savârthasiddh, 'All-Prospering,'  
Briefe, Siddârtha.

'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 Trâyastrinshas-Heaven,  
Where countless Devas worship her, and wait  
Attendant on that radiant Motherhead.  
But for the Babe they found a foster-nurse,  
Princess Mahâprajâpati—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,

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‘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  
‘*Gâyatrî*’ named, which only High-born hear:—

*Om, tatsaviturvarenyam  
Bhargo devasya dhîmahî  
Dhiyo yo na prachodayât.*

‘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, Nî,  
Mangal, Parusha, Yava, Tirthi, Uk,  
Darad, Sikhvani, 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;

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

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 kôti, nahut, ninnahut,  
Khamba, viskhamba, abab, attata,  
To kumuds, gundhikas, and utpalas,  
By pundarîkas unto padumas,  
Which last is how you count the utmost grains  
Of Hastagiri ground to finest dust;  
But beyond that a numeration is,  
The Kâtha, used to note the stars of night;  
The Kôti-Kâtha, 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.'

## BOOK THE FIRST

‘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. Paramânus 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

Mete 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 yôjana; and, Master! if it please,

I shall recite how many sun-motes lie

From end to end within a yôjana.’

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 Gûrû. 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.’

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

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 oftentimes pause,  
Letting the deer pass free; would oftentimes 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. Then it befell,  
In the Royal garden on a day of spring,  
A flock of wild swans passed, voyaging north  
To their nest-places on Himâla'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,

BOOK THE FIRST

Bright scarlet blood-gouts staining the pure plumes.  
Which seeing, Prince Siddârtha 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 Siddârtha, '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 throbb'd in this white  
wing.'

And Devadatta answered, 'The wild thing,  
Living or dead, is his who fetched it down;  
'Twas no man's in the clouds, but fall'n 'tis 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

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

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 his 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 oft-times 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 land of wells and gardens, where,

## BOOK THE FIRST

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 long 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 seven 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 swart peasant sweated for his wage,  
Toiling for leave to live; and how he urged  
The great-eyed oxen through the flaming hours,



Goaded 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 hunt  
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 Siddârtha sighed. 'Is 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

*So the Bright Ones came*











*BOOK THE SECOND*







## 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,  
Streamswandered wild, and musky thickets stretched,  
With many a bright pavilion and fair lawn,  
In midst of which Siddârtha 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.

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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Which the King marking, called his Ministers:  
'Bethink ye, sirs! 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

BOOK THE SECOND

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 Sākya 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 'twas 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. Thus flocked  
Kapilavastu's maidens to the gate,  
Each with her dark hair newly smoothed and bound,  
Eyelashes lustred 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;

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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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 Yasôdhara, and they that stood  
Nearest Siddârtha saw the princely boy  
Start, as the radiant girl approached. A form  
Of heavenly mould; a gait like Parvati's;  
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 Sâkyâ 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 springs, where Nandadevi stands,

## BOOK THE SECOND

Sate umpire while they raced beneath the firs  
Like hares at eve that run their playful rings;  
One with flower-stars he crowned; one with long  
    plumes  
Plucked from eyed pheasant and the jungle-cock;  
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 Yasôdhara;  
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 Siddârtha heedless, till there passed  
Great Suprabuddha's child, Yasôdhara;  
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 Sâkyas, when any asked a maid

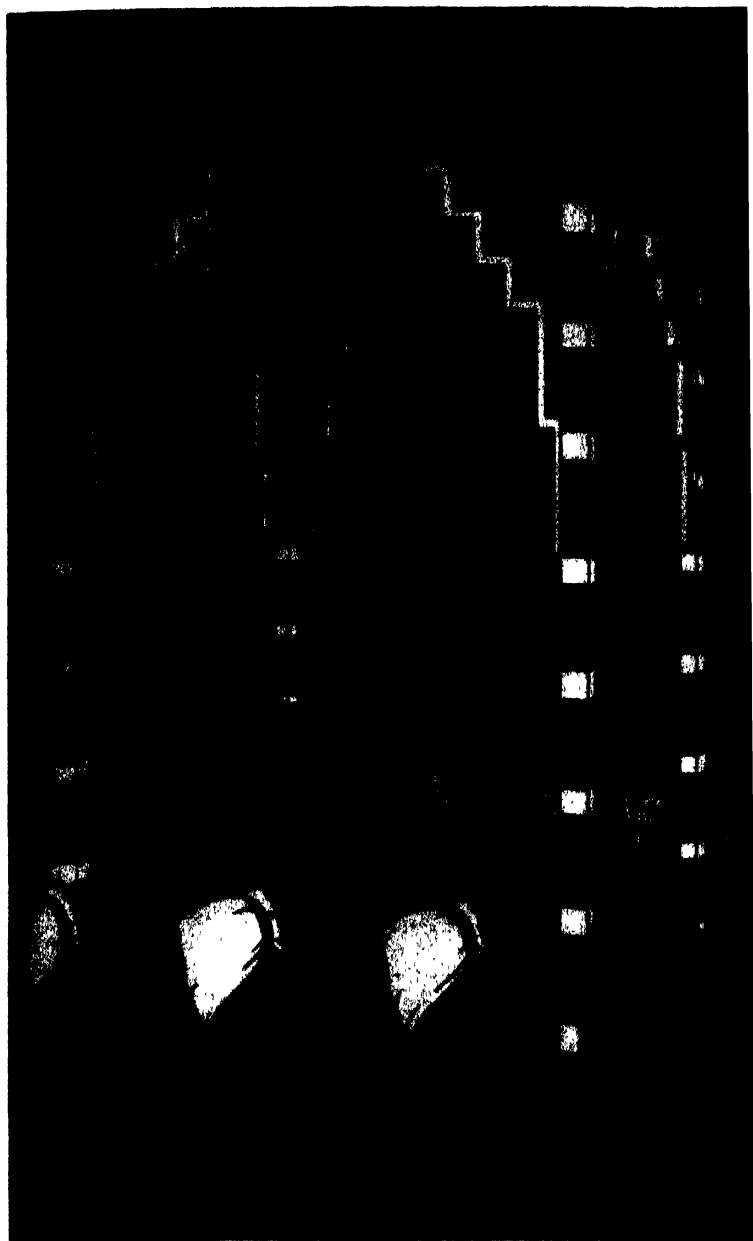
Of noble house, fair and desirable,  
He must make good his skill in martial arts  
Against all suitors who should challenge it;  
Nor might this custom break itself for kings.  
Therefore her father spake: 'Say to the King,  
The child is sought by princes far and near;  
If thy most gentle son can 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 Yasôdhara 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 'twas given forth that on the seventh day  
The Prince Siddârtha summoned whoso would  
To match with him in feats of manliness,  
The victor's crown to be Yasôdhara.

Therefore, upon the seventh day, there went  
The Sâkyas lords, and town and country round,  
Unto the maidân; 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 the maid went too*









## BOOK THE SECOND

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 Siddârtha 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 Yasôdhara,  
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 Siddârtha bade them set his drum  
Ten gows from off the line, until it seemed  
A cowry-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 Yasôdhara  
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:

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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‘That is for play, not love,’ he said; ‘hath none  
A bow more fit for Sâkya lords to use?’  
And one said, ‘There is Sinhahânu’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 Siddârtha 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 Sinhahânu’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.

Next, 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  
Siddârtha’s blade shred at one flashing stroke,

## BOOK THE SECOND

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 maidân, 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;  
Fetch 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 Sâkya  
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 Siddârtha meddle with this Bhût,  
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 Siddârtha mounted; then  
Went soberly to touch of knee and rein  
Before all eyes, so that the people said,  
'Strive no more, for Siddârtha 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 hast won.'  
Then at a word the lovely Indian girl  
Rose from her place above the throng, and took  
A crown of môgra-flowers, and lightly drew  
The veil of black and gold across her brow,  
Proud-pacing past the youths, until she came  
To where Siddârtha stood in grace divine,  
New lighted from the night-dark steed, which bent  
Its strong neck meekly underneath his arm.

## BOOK THE SECOND

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 Himâla'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 Yasôdhara  
Wore for me; hot the strife waxed in that wood



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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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  
Whom 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 Sâkyas 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 Yasôdhara,  
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

## BOOK THE SECOND

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 sâl,  
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  
Buzz out of sight in thickets. Northwards soared  
The stainless ramps of huge Himâla'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;

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

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  
Sandal-wood, 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

## BOOK THE SECOND

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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 flow'rs, Yasôdhara  
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 Yasôdhara; and thus  
Siddârtha 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

## BOOK THE SECOND

Without, where aches and plagues were, tears and  
fears,  
And wail of mourners, and grim fume of pyres.  
'Twas 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.'

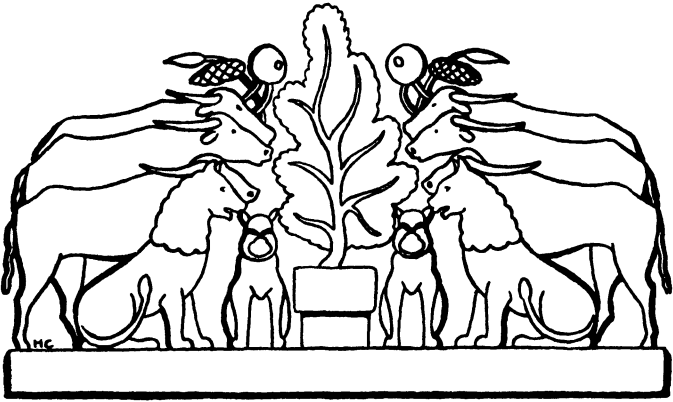
Wherefore, around that pleasant prison-house—  
Where love was gaoler and delights its bars—  
But far removed from sight, the King bade build  
A massive wall, and in the wall a gate  
With brazen folding-doors, which but to roll  
Back on their hinges asked a hundred arms;  
Also the noise of that prodigious gate  
Opening, was heard full half a yôjana.  
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*







### BOOK THE THIRD

IN which calm home of happy light and love  
Lived 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 ofttimes, when he lay with gentle head  
Lulled on the dark breasts of Yasôdhara,  
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 terror-struck;  
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

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

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 Siddârtha 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.*

## BOOK THE THIRD

*But thou that art to save, thine hour is nigh!  
The sad world waiteth 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.*

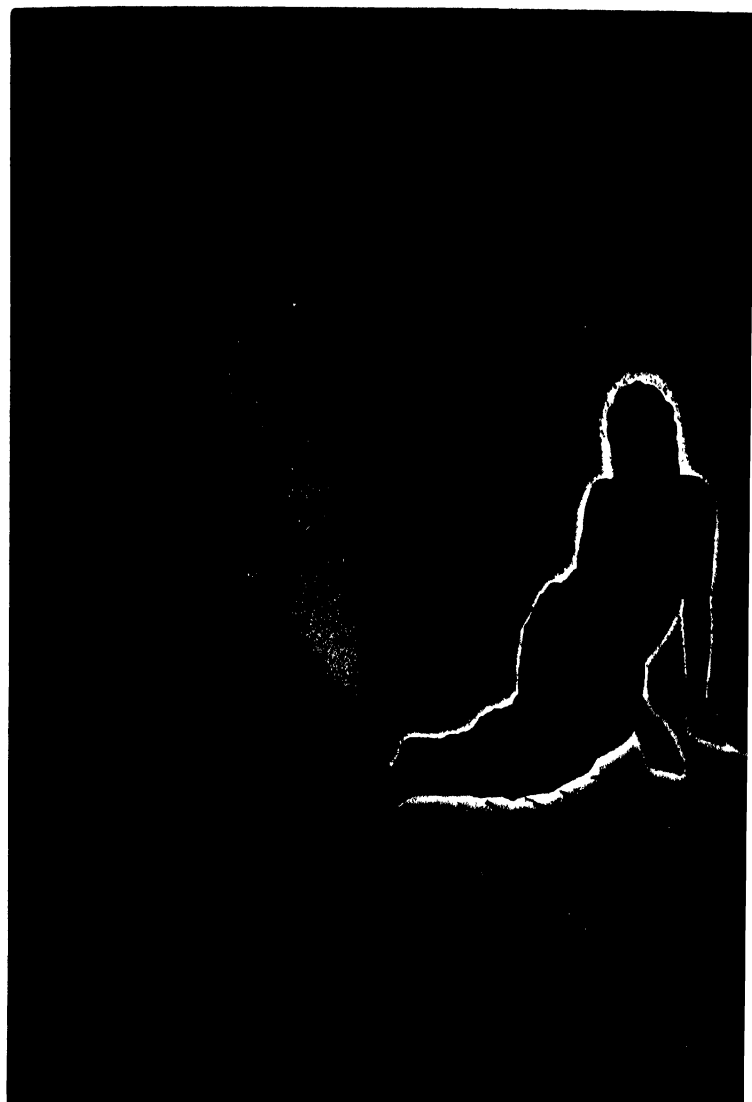
Thereafter it befell he sate at eve  
Amid his beauteous Court, holding the hand  
Of sweet Yasôdhara, and some maid told—  
With breaks of music when her rich voice dropped—  
An ancient tale to speed the hour of dusk,  
Of love, and of a magic horse, and lands  
Wonderful, distant, where pale peoples 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, Yasôdhara, 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 their 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 thy 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, maidâns, jungle, koss on koss;  
And next King Bimbasâra's realm, and then  
The vast flat world, with crores on crores of folk.'  
'Good,' said Siddârtha; 'let the word be sent  
That Channa yoke my chariot—at noon  
To-morrow I shall ride and see beyond.'

*And some maid told an ancient tale*









## BOOK THE THIRD

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 spiriting 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 to-day  
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 Suddhōdana commands.'

So all was comely and the houses trim  
Throughout Kapilavastu, while the Prince

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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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 Siddârtha 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 Sâkya 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,

## BOOK THE THIRD

Crept forth a wretch in rags, haggard and foul,  
An old, old man, whose shrivelled skin, sun-tanned,  
Clung like a beast's hide to its 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  
To-morrow 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 Siddârtha 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 "to-morrow 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 Yasôdhara  
Live fourscore years, is this old age for her,  
Jâlîni, 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 Siddârtha, 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  
Yasôdhara 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, Yasôdhara!  
Loveless, unlovely, weak, and old, and bowed.  
Nay, though we locked up love and life with lips

## BOOK THE THIRD

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 yon 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 Suddhōdana 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 Siddārtha 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 LIGHT OF ASIA

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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

## BOOK THE THIRD

The sevenfold mysteries of the midnight dream,  
Bowed reverent and said, 'O Maharâj!  
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 enthral Siddârtha's heart  
Amid those dancers of his pleasure-house;  
Also he set at all the brazen doors  
A double 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 Suddhâdana. 'Your Majesty  
In tender heed hath warned the folk before

## BOOK THE THIRD

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  
To-morrow, with my servants, through the streets.'  
And the King said, amidst 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 Sâkya 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,

The buyers with their money in the cloth,  
The war of words to cheapen this or that,  
The shout to clear the road, the huge stone wheels,  
The strong slow oxen and their rustling loads,  
The singing bearers with the palanquins,  
The broad-necked hamals sweating in the sun,  
The housewives bearing water from the well  
With balanced chatties, and athwart their hips  
The black-eyed babes; the fly-swarmed sweetmeat  
shops,  
The weaver at his loom, the cotton-bow  
Twanging, the millstones grinding meal, the dogs  
Prowling for orts, the skilful armourer  
With tong and hammer linking shirts of mail,  
The blacksmith with a mattock and a spear  
Reddening together in his coals, the school  
Where round their Guru, in a grave half-moon,  
The Sâkyâ children sang the mantras through,  
And learned the greater and the lesser gods;  
The dyers stretching waistcloths in the sun  
Wet from the vats—orange, and rose, and green;  
The soldiers clanking past with swords and shields,  
The camel-drivers rocking on the humps,  
The Brahman proud, the martial Kshatriya,  
The humble toiling Sudra; here a throng  
Gathered to watch some chattering snake-tamer  
Wind round his wrist the living jewellery  
Of asp and nâg, or charm the hooded death  
To angry dance with drone of beaded gourd;  
There a long line of drums and horns, which went,  
With steeds gay painted and silk canopies,  
To bring the young bride home; and here a wife

## BOOK THE THIRD

Stealing with cakes and garlands to the god  
To pray her husband's safe return from trade,  
Or beg a boy next birth; hard by the booths  
Where the swart potters beat the noisy brass  
For lamps and lotas; thence, by temple walls  
And gateways, to the river and the bridge  
Under the city walls.

                                  These had they passed  
When from the roadside moaned a mournful voice,  
'Help, masters! lift me to my feet; oh, help!  
Or I shall die before I reach my house!'  
A stricken wretch it was, whose quivering frame,  
Caught by some deadly plague, lay in the dust  
Writhing, with fiery purple blotches specked:  
The chill sweat beaded on his brow, his mouth  
Was dragged awry with twitchings of sore pain,  
The wild eyes swam with inward agony.  
Gasping, he clutched the grass to rise, and rose  
Half-way, then sank, with quaking feeble limbs  
And scream of terror, crying, 'Ah, the pain!  
Good people, help!' whereon Siddârtha ran,  
Lifted the woful man with tender hands,  
With sweet looks laid the sick head on his knee,  
And, while his soft touch comforted the wretch,  
Asked, 'Brother, what is ill with thee? what harm  
Hath fallen? wherefore canst thou not arise?  
Why is it, Channa, that he pants and moans,  
And gasps to speak, and sighs so pitiful?'  
Then spake the charioteer: 'Great Prince! this man  
Is smitten with some pest; his elements  
Are all confounded; in his veins the blood,  
Which ran a wholesome river, leaps and boils

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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A fiery flood; his heart, which kept good time,  
Beats like an ill-played drum-skin, quick and slow;  
His sinews slacken like a bowstring slipped;  
The strength is gone from ham, and loin, and neck,  
And all the grace and joy of manhood fled:  
This is a sick man with the fit upon him.  
See how he plucks and plucks to seize his grief,  
And rolls his bloodshot orbs, and grinds his teeth,  
And draws his breath as if 'twere choking smoke!  
Lo! now he would be dead; but shall not die  
Until the plague hath had its work in him,  
Killing the nerves which die before the life;  
Then, when his strings have cracked with agony  
And all his bones are empty of the sense  
To ache, the plague will quit and light elsewhere.  
Oh, sir! it is not good to hold him so!  
The harm may pass, and strike thee, even thee.'  
But spake the Prince, still comforting the man,  
'And are there others, are there many thus?  
Or might it be to me as now with him?'  
'Great Lord!' answered the charioteer, 'this comes  
In many forms to all men; griefs and wounds,  
Sickness and terrors, palsies, leprosies,  
Hot fevers, watery wastings, issues, blains  
Befall all flesh and enter everywhere.'  
'Come such ills unobserved?' the Prince inquired.  
And Channa said, 'Like the sly snake they come  
That stings unseen; like the striped murderer,  
Who waits to spring from the Karunda bush,  
Hiding beside the jungle path; or like  
The lightning, striking these and sparing those,  
As chance may send.'

BOOK THE THIRD

‘Then all men live in fear?’

‘So live they, Prince!’

‘And none can say, “I sleep  
Happy and whole to-night, and so shall wake”?’  
‘None say it.’

‘And the end of many aches,  
Which come unseen, and will come when they come,  
Is this, a broken body and sad mind,  
And so old age?’

‘Yea, if men last as long.’

‘But if they cannot bear their agonies,  
Or if they will not bear, and seek a term;  
Or if they bear, and be, as this man is,  
Too weak except for groans, and so still live,  
And growing old, grow older, then—what end?’  
‘They die, Prince.’

‘Die?’

‘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 Siddârtha 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,

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

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 jungle wind,  
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,

## BOOK THE THIRD

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, 'tis 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! Siddârtha 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;  
Since pleasures end in pain, and youth in age,



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

And love in loss, and life in hateful death,  
And death in unknown lives, which will but yoke  
Men to their wheel again to whirl the round  
Of false delights and woes that are not false.  
Me too this lure hath cheated, so it seemed  
Lovely to live, and life a sunlit stream  
For ever flowing in a changeless peace;  
Whereas the foolish ripple of the flood  
Dances so lightly down by bloom and lawn  
Only to pour its crystal quicklier  
Into the foul salt sea. The veil is rent  
Which blinded me! I am as all these men  
Who cry upon their gods and are not heard,  
Or are not heeded—yet there must be aid!  
For them and me and all there must be help!  
Perchance the gods have need of help themselves,  
Being so feeble that when sad lips cry  
They cannot save! I would not let one cry  
Whom I could save! How can it be that Brahm  
Would make a world and keep it miserable,  
Since, if, all-powerful, he leaves it so,  
He is not good, and if not powerful,  
He is not God?—Channa! lead home again!  
It is enough! mine eyes have seen enough!

Which when the King heard, at the gates he set  
A triple guard; and bade no man should pass  
By day or night, issuing or entering in,  
Until the days were numbered of that dream.

*BOOK THE FOURTH*





## BOOK THE FOURTH

BUT, when the days were numbered, then befell  
The parting of our Lord—which was to be—  
Whereby came wailing in the Golden Home,  
Woe to the King and sorrow o'er the land,  
But for all flesh deliverance, and that Law  
Which whoso hears—the same shall make him free.

Softly the Indian night sinks on the plains  
At full moon, in the month of Chaitra Shud,  
When mangoes redden and the asôka buds  
Sweeten the breeze, and Rama's birthday comes,  
And all the fields are glad and all the towns.  
Softly that night fell over Vishramvan,  
Fragrant with blooms and jewelled thick with stars,  
And cool with mountain airs sighing adown  
From snow-flats on Himâla high outspread;  
For the moon swung above the eastern peaks,  
Climbing the spangled vault, and lighting clear

Rohini's ripples, and the hills and vales,  
And all the sleeping land; and near at hand  
Silvering those roof-tops of the pleasure-house,  
Where nothing stirred nor sign of watching was,  
Save at the outer gates, whose warders cried  
*Mudra*, the watchword, and the countersign  
*Angana*, and the watch-drums beat a round;  
Whereat the earth lay still, except for yelp  
Of prowling jackals, and the ceaseless trill  
Of crickets in the garden grounds.

Within—

Where the moon glittered through the lace-worked  
stone,  
Lighting the walls of pearl-shell and the floors  
Paved with veined marble—softly fell her beams  
On such rare company of Indian girls,  
It seemed some chamber sweet in Paradise  
Where Devîs rested. All the chosen ones  
Of Prince Siddârtha's pleasure-home were there,  
The brightest and most faithful of the Court;  
Each form so lovely in the peace of sleep,  
That you had said, 'This is the pearl of all!'  
Save that beside her or beyond her lay  
Fairer and fairer, till the pleased gaze  
Roamed o'er that feast of beauty as it roams  
From gem to gem in some great goldsmith-work,  
Caught by each colour till the next is seen.  
With careless grace they lay, their soft brown limbs  
Part hidden, part revealed; their glossy hair  
Bound back with gold or flowers, or flowing loose  
In black waves down the shapely nape and neck.  
Lulled into pleasant dreams by happy toils,

## BOOK THE FOURTH

They slept, no wearier than jewelled birds  
Which sing and love all day, then under wing  
Fold head, till morn bids sing and love again.  
Lamps of chased silver swinging from the roof  
In silver chains, and fed with perfumed oils,  
Made with the moonbeams tender lights and shades,  
Whereby were seen the perfect lines of grace,  
The bosom's placid heave, the soft stained palms  
Drooping or clasped, the faces fair and dark,  
The great arched brows, the parted lips, the teeth  
Like pearls a merchant picks to make a string,  
The satin-lidded eyes, with lashes dropped  
Sweeping the delicate cheeks, the rounded wrists,  
The smooth small feet with bells and bangles decked,  
Tinkling low music where some sleeper moved,  
Breaking her smiling dream of some new dance  
Praised by the Prince, some magic ring to find,  
Some fairy love-gift. Here one lay full-length,  
Her vina by her cheek, and in its strings  
The little fingers still all interlaced  
As when the last notes of her light song played  
Those radiant eyes to sleep, and sealed her own.  
Another slumbered folding in her arms  
A desert-antelope, its slender head  
Buried with back-sloped horns between her breasts,  
Soft-nestling; it was eating—when both drowsed—  
Red roses, and her loosening hand still held  
A rose half-mumbled, while a rose-leaf curled  
Between the deer's lips. Here two friends had dozed  
Together, weaving môgra-buds, which bound  
Their sister-sweetness in a starry chain,  
Linking them limb to limb and heart to heart,

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

One pillowed on the blossoms, one on her.  
Another, ere she slept, was stringing stones  
To make a necklet—agate, onyx, sard,  
Coral, and moonstone—round her wrist it gleamed  
A coil of splendid colour, while she held,  
Unthreaded yet, the bead to close it up—  
Green turkis, carved with golden gods and scripts.  
Lulled by the cadence of the garden stream,  
Thus lay they on the clustered carpets, each  
A girlish rose with shut leaves, waiting dawn  
To open and make daylight beautiful.  
This was the ante-chamber of the Prince;  
But at the purdah's fringe the sweetest slept—  
Gunga and Gotami—chief ministers  
In that still House of love.

The purdah hung,  
Crimson and blue, with broidered threads of gold,  
Across a portal carved in sandal-wood;  
Whence by three steps the way was to the bower  
Of inmost splendour, and the marriage-couch  
Set on a dais soft with silver cloths,  
Where the foot fell as though it trod on piles  
Of neem-blooms. All the walls were plates of pearl,  
Cut shapely from the shells of Lanka's wave;  
And o'er the alabaster roof there ran  
Rich inlayings of lotus and of bird,  
Wrought in skilled work of lazulite and jade,  
Jacynth and jasper; woven round the dome,  
And down the sides, and all about the frames  
Wherein were set the fretted lattices,  
Through which there breathed, with moonlight and  
cool airs,

## BOOK THE FOURTH

Scents from the shell-flowers and the jasmine sprays;  
Not bringing thither grace or tenderness  
Sweeter than shed from those fair presences  
Within the place—the beauteous Sâkyâ Prince,  
And hers, the stately, bright Yasôdhara.

Half risen from her soft nest at his side,  
The chuddar fallen to her waist, her brow  
Laid in both palms, the lovely Princess leaned  
With heaving bosom and fast-falling tears.  
Thrice with her lips she touched Siddârtha's hand,  
And at the third kiss moaned, 'Awake, my Lord!  
Give me the comfort of thy speech!' Then he:  
'What is it with thee, O my life?' but still  
She moaned anew before the words would come;  
Then spake, 'Alas, my Prince! I sank to sleep  
Most happy, for the babe I bear of thee  
Quickened this eve, and at my heart there beat  
That double pulse of life and joy and love  
Whose happy music lulled me, but—aho!—  
In slumber I beheld three sights of dread,  
With thought whereof my heart is throbbing yet.  
I saw a white bull with wide-branching horns,  
A lord of pastures, pacing through the streets,  
Bearing upon his front a gem which shone  
As if some star had dropped to glitter there,  
Or like the kantha-stone the great Snake keeps  
To make bright daylight underneath the earth.  
Slow through the streets towards the gates he paced,  
And none could stay him, though there came a voice  
From Indra's temple, "If ye stay him not,  
The glory of the city goeth forth."



Yet none could stay him. Then I wept aloud,  
And locked my arms about his neck, and strove,  
And bade them bar the gates; but that ox-king  
Bellowed, and, lightly tossing free his crest,  
Broke from my clasp, and bursting through the bars,  
Trampled the warders down and passed away.  
The next strange dream was this: Four Presences  
Splendid, with shining eyes, so beautiful  
They seemed the Regents of the Earth who dwell  
On Mount Sumeru, lighting from the sky  
With retinue of countless heavenly ones,  
Swift swept unto our city, where I saw  
The golden flag of Indra on the gate  
Flutter and fall; and lo! there rose instead  
A glorious banner, all the folds whereof  
Rippled with flashing fire of rubies sewn  
Thick on the silver threads, the rays wherefrom  
Set forth new words and weighty sentences  
Whose message made all living creatures glad;  
And from the east the wind of sunrise blew  
With tender waft, opening those jewelled scrolls  
So that all flesh might read; and wondrous blooms—  
Plucked in what clime I know not—fell in showers,  
Coloured as none are coloured in our groves.’

Then spake the Prince: ‘All this, my Lotus-flower!  
Was good to see.’

‘Ay, Lord,’ the Princess said,  
‘Save that it ended with a voice of fear  
Crying, “The time is nigh! the time is nigh!”  
Thereat the third dream came; for when I sought  
Thy side, sweet Lord! ah, on our bed there lay

## BOOK THE FOURTH

An unpressed pillow and an empty robe—  
Nothing of thee but those!—nothing of thee,  
Who art my life and light, my king, my world!  
And, sleeping still, I rose, and sleeping saw  
Thy belt of pearls, tied here below my breasts,  
Change to a stinging snake; my ankle-rings  
Fall off, my golden bangles part and fall;  
The jasmines in my hair wither to dust;  
While this our bridal-couch sank to the ground,  
And something rent the crimson purdah down:  
Then far away I heard the white bull low,  
And far away the embroidered banner flap,  
And once again that cry, "The time is come!"  
But with that cry—which shakes my spirit still—  
I woke! O Prince! what may such visions mean  
Except I die, or—worse than any death—  
Thou shouldst forsake me, or be taken?"

Soft

As the last smile of sunset was the look  
Siddârtha bent upon his weeping wife.  
'Comfort thee, dear!' he said, 'if comfort lives  
In changeless love! for though thy dreams may be  
Shadows of things to come, and though the gods  
Are shaken in their seats, and though the world  
Stands nigh, perchance, to know some way of help,  
Yet, whatsoever fall to thee and me,  
Be sure I loved and love Yasôdhara.  
Thou knowest how I muse these many moons,  
Seeking to save the sad earth I have seen;  
And when the time comes, that which will be will.  
But if my soul yearns sore for souls unknown,  
And if I grieve for griefs which are not mine,

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Judge how my high-winged thoughts must hover  
here

O'er all these lives that share and sweeten mine—  
So dear! and thine the dearest, gentlest, best,  
And nearest. Ah, thou mother of my babe!  
Whose body mixed with mine for this fair hope,  
When most my spirit wanders, raging round  
The lands and seas—as full of ruth for men  
As the far-flying dove is full of ruth  
For her twin nestlings—ever it has come  
Home with glad wing and passionate plumes to thee,  
Who art the sweetness of my kind best seen,  
The utmost of their good, the tenderest  
Of all their tenderness, mine most of all.  
Therefore, whatever after this betide,  
Bethink thee of that lordly bull which lowed,  
That jewelled banner in thy dream which waved  
Its folds departing, and of this be sure,  
Always I loved and always love thee well,  
And what I sought for all sought most for thee.  
But thou, take comfort; and, if sorrow falls,  
Take comfort still in deeming if there may be  
A way to peace on earth by woes of ours;  
And have with this embrace what faithful love  
Can think of thanks or frame for benison—  
Too little, seeing Love's strong self is weak—  
Yet kiss me on the mouth, and drink these words  
From heart to heart therewith, that thou mayst  
know—

What others will not—that I loved thee most  
Because I loved so well all living souls.  
Now, Princess! rest; for I will rise and watch.'

## BOOK THE FOURTH

Then in her tears she slept, but sleeping sighed—  
As if that vision passed again—‘The time!  
The time is come!’ Whereat Siddârtha turned,  
And, lo! the moon shone by the Crab! the stars  
In that same silver order long foretold  
Stood ranged to say, ‘This is the night!—choose thou  
The way of greatness or the way of good:  
To reign a King of kings, or wander lone,  
Crownless and homeless, that the world be helped.’  
Moreover, with the whispers of the gloom,  
Came to his ears again that warning song,  
As when the Devas spoke upon the wind:  
And surely gods were round about the place  
Watching our Lord, who watched the shining stars.

‘I will depart,’ he spake; ‘the hour is come!  
Thy tender lips, dear Sleeper, summon me  
To that which saves the earth but sunders us;  
And in the silence of yon sky I read  
My fated message flashing. Unto this  
Came I, and unto this all nights and days  
Have led me; for I will not have that crown  
Which may be mine: I lay aside those realms  
Which wait the gleaming of my naked sword:  
My chariot shall not roll with bloody wheels  
From victory to victory, till earth  
Wears the red record of my name. I choose  
To tread its paths with patient, stainless feet,  
Making its dust my bed, its loneliest wastes  
My dwelling, and its meanest things my mates;  
Clad in no prouder garb than outcasts wear,  
Fed with no meats save what the charitable

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Give of their will, sheltered by no more pomp  
Than the dim cave lends or the jungle-bush.  
This will I do because the woful cry  
Of life and all flesh living cometh up  
Into my ears, and all my soul is full  
Of pity for the sickness of this world;  
Which I will heal, if healing may be found  
By uttermost renouncing and strong strife.  
For which of all the great and lesser gods  
Have power or pity? Who hath seen them—who?  
What have they wrought to help their worshippers?  
How hath it steaded man to pray, and pay  
Tithes of the corn and oil, to chant the charms,  
To slay the shrieking sacrifice, to rear  
The stately fane, to feed the priests, and call  
On Vishnu, Shiva, Surya, who save  
None—not the worthiest—from the griefs that teach  
Those litanies of flattery and fear  
Ascending day by day, like wasted smoke?  
Hath any of my brothers 'scaped thereby  
The aches of life, the stings of love and loss,  
The fiery fever and the ague-shake,  
The slow, dull, sinking into withered age,  
The horrible dark death—and what beyond  
Waits—till the whirling wheel comes up again,  
And new lives bring new sorrows to be borne,  
New generations for the new desires  
Which have their end in the old mockeries?  
Hath any of my tender sisters found  
Fruit of the fast or harvest of the hymn,  
Or bought one pang the less at bearing-time  
For white curds offered and trim tulsi-leaves?

## BOOK THE FOURTH

Nay; it may be some of the gods are good  
And evil some, but all in action weak;  
Both pitiful and pitiless, and both—  
As men are—bound upon this wheel of change,  
Knowing the former and the after lives.  
For so our scriptures truly seem to teach,  
That—once, and wheresoe'er, and whence begun—  
Life runs its rounds of living, climbing up  
From mote, and gnat, and worm, reptile, and fish,  
Bird and shagged beast, man, demon, deva, God,  
To clod and mote again; so are we kin  
To all that is; and thus, if one might save  
Man from his curse, the whole wide world should  
share

The lightened horror of this ignorance  
Whose shadow is still fear, and cruelty  
Its bitter pastime. Yea, if one might save!  
And means must be! There must be refuge! Men  
Perished in winter winds till one smote fire  
From flint-stones coldly hiding what they held,  
The red spark treasured from the kindling sun.  
They gorged on flesh like wolves, till one sowed corn,  
Which grew a weed, yet makes the life of man;  
They mowed and babbled till some tongue struck  
speech,

And patient fingers framed the lettered sound.  
What good gift have my brothers, but it came  
From search and strife and loving sacrifice?  
If one, then, being great and fortunate,  
Rich, dowered with health and ease, from birth  
designed  
To rule—if he would rule—a King of kings;

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

If one, not tired with life's long day, but glad  
I' the freshness of its morning, one not cloyed  
With love's delicious feasts, but hungry still;  
If one not worn and wrinkled, sadly sage,  
But joyous in the glory and the grace  
That mix with evils here, and free to choose  
Earth's loveliest at his will: one even as I,  
Who ache not, lack not, grieve not, save with griefs  
Which are not mine, except as I am man;—  
If such a one, having so much to give,  
Gave all, laying it down for love of men,  
And thenceforth spent himself to search for truth,  
Wringing the secret of deliverance forth,  
Whether it lurk in hells or hide in heavens,  
Or hover, unrevealed, nigh unto all:  
Surely at last, far off, sometime, somewhere,  
The veil would lift for his deep-searching eyes,  
The road would open for his painful feet,  
That should be won for which he lost the world,  
And Death might find him conqueror of death.  
This will I do, who have a realm to lose,  
Because I love my realm, because my heart  
Beats with each throb of all the hearts that ache,  
Known and unknown, these that are mine and those  
Which shall be mine, a thousand million more  
Saved by this sacrifice I offer now.  
Oh, summoning stars! I come! Oh, mournful earth!  
For thee and thine I lay aside my youth,  
My throne, my joys, my golden days, my nights,  
My happy palace—and thine arms, sweet Queen!  
Harder to put aside than all the rest!  
Yet thee, too, I shall save, saving this earth;

## BOOK THE FOURTH

And that which stirs within thy tender womb,  
My child, the hidden blossom of our loves,  
Whom if I wait to bless my mind will fail.  
Wife! child! father! and people! ye must share  
A little while the anguish of this hour  
That light may break and all flesh learn the Law.  
Now am I fixed, and now I will depart,  
Never to come again, till what I seek  
Be found—if fervent search and strife avail.'

So, with his brow he touched her feet, and bent  
The farewell of fond eyes, unutterable,  
Upon her sleeping face, still wet with tears;  
And thrice around the bed in reverence,  
As though it were an altar, softly stepped  
With clasped hands laid upon his beating heart,  
'For never,' spake he, 'lie I there again!'  
And thrice he made to go, but thrice came back,  
So strong her beauty was, so large his love:  
Then, o'er his head drawing his cloth, he turned  
And raised the purdah's edge:

There drooped, close-hushed,  
In such sealed sleep as water-lilies know,  
That lovely garden of his Indian girls;  
The twin dark-petalled lotus-buds of all—  
Gunga and Gotami—on either side,  
And those, their silk-leaved sisterhood, beyond.  
'Pleasant ye are to me, sweet friends!' he said,  
'And dear to leave; yet, if I leave ye not,  
What else will come to all of us save old  
Without assuage and death without avail?  
Lo! as ye lie asleep so must ye lie



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

A-dead; and when the rose dies where are gone  
Its scent and splendour? when the lamp is drained  
Whither is fled the flame? Press heavy, Night!  
Upon their down-dropped lids, and seal their lips,  
That no tear stay me and no faithful voice.  
For all the brighter that these made my life,  
The bitterer it is that they and I,  
And all, should live as trees do—so much spring,  
Such and such rains and frosts, such winter-times,  
And then dead leaves, with maybe spring again,  
Or axe-stroke at the root. This will not I,  
Whose life here was a god's!—this would not I,  
Though all my days were godlike, while men moan  
Under their darkness. Therefore farewell, friends!  
While life is good to give, I give, and go  
To seek deliverance and that unknown Light!

Then, lightly treading where those sleepers lay,  
Into the night Siddârtha passed: its eyes,  
The watchful stars, looked love on him; its breath,  
The wandering wind, kissed his robe's fluttered  
fringe;  
The garden-blossoms, folded for the dawn,  
Opened their velvet hearts to waft him scents  
From pink and purple censers; o'er the land,  
From Himalay unto the Indian Sea,  
A tremor spread, as if earth's soul beneath  
Stirred with an unknown hope; and holy books—  
Which tell the story of our Lord—say, too,  
That rich celestial musics thrilled the air  
From hosts on hosts of shining ones, who thronged  
Eastward and westward, making bright the night—

*He turned and raised the purdah's edge*







## BOOK THE FOURTH

Northward and southward, making glad the ground.  
Also those four dread Regents of the Earth,  
Descending at the doorway, two by two,—  
With their bright legions of Invisibles  
In arms of sapphire, silver, gold, and pearl—  
Watched with joined hands the Indian Prince, who  
stood,  
His tearful eyes raised to the stars, and lips  
Close-set with purpose of prodigious love.

Then strode he forth into the gloom, and cried:  
‘Channa, awake! and bring out Kantaka!’  
‘What would my Lord?’ the charioteer replied—  
Slow-rising from his place beside the gate—  
‘To ride at night when all the ways are dark?’

‘Speak low,’ Siddârtha said, ‘and bring my horse,  
For now the hour is come when I should quit  
This golden prison, where my heart lives caged,  
To find the truth; which henceforth I will seek,  
For all men’s sake, until the truth be found.’

‘Alas! dear Prince,’ answered the charioteer,  
‘Spake then for nought those wise and holy men  
Who cast the stars, and bade us wait the time  
When King Suddhâdana’s great son should rule  
Realms upon realms, and be a Lord of lords?  
Wilt thou ride hence and let the rich world slip  
Out of thy grasp, to hold a beggar’s bowl?  
Wilt thou go forth into the friendless waste  
That hast this Paradise of pleasures here?’

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

The Prince made answer, 'Unto this I came,  
And not for thrones: the kingdom that I crave  
Is more than many realms—and all things pass  
To change and death. Bring me forth Kantaka!'

'Most honoured,' spake again the charioteer,  
'Bethink thee of my Lord thy father's grief!  
Bethink thee of their woe whose bliss thou art—  
How shalt thou help them, first undoing them?'  
Siddârtha answered, 'Friend, that love is false  
Which clings to love for selfish sweets of love;  
But I, who love these more than joys of mine—  
Yea, more than joys of theirs—depart to save  
Them and all flesh, if utmost love avail:  
Go, bring me Kantaka!'

Then Channa said,  
'Master, I go!' and forthwith, mournfully,  
Unto the stall he passed, and from the rack  
Took down the silver bit and bridle-chains,  
Breast-cord and curb, and knitted fast the straps,  
And linked the hooks, and led out Kantaka:  
Whom, tethering to the ring, he combed and dressed,  
Stroking the snowy coat to silken gloss;  
Next on the steed he laid the numdah square,  
Fitted the saddle-cloth across, and set  
The saddle fair, drew tight the jewelled girths,  
Buckled the breech-bands and the martingale,  
And made fall both the stirrups of worked gold.  
Then over all he cast a golden net,  
With tassels of seed-pearl and silken strings,  
And led the great horse to the palace door,  
Where stood the Prince; but when he saw his Lord,

## BOOK THE FOURTH

Right glad he waxed and joyously he neighed,  
Spreading his scarlet nostrils; and the books  
Write, 'Surely all had heard Kantaka's neigh,  
And that strong trampling of his iron heels,  
Save that the Devas laid soft unseen wings  
Over their ears, and kept the sleepers deaf.'

Fondly Siddârtha drew the proud head down,  
Patted the shining neck, and said, 'Be still,  
White Kantaka! be still, and bear me now  
The farthest journey ever rider rode;  
For this night take I horse to find the truth,  
And where my quest will end yet know I not,  
Save that it shall not end until I find.  
Therefore to-night, good steed, be fierce and bold!  
Let nothing stay thee, though a thousand blades  
Deny the road! let neither wall nor moat  
Forbid our flight! Look! if I touch thy flank  
And cry, "On, Kantaka!" let whirlwinds lag  
Behind thy course! Be fire and air, my horse!  
To stead thy Lord; so shalt thou share with him  
The greatness of this deed which helps the world;  
For therefore ride I, not for men alone,  
But for all things which, speechless, share our pain  
And have no hope, nor wit to ask for hope.  
Now, therefore, bear thy master valorously!'

Then to the saddle lightly leaping, he  
Touched the arched crest, and Kantaka sprang forth  
With armed hoofs sparkling on the stones, and ring  
Of champing bit; but none did hear that sound,  
For that the Suddha Devas, gathering near,



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

Plucked the red mohra-flowers and strewed them  
thick

Under his tread, while hands invisible  
Muffled the ringing bit and bridle-chains.  
Moreover, it is written when they came  
Upon the pavement near the inner gates,  
The Yakshas of the air laid magic cloths  
Under the stallion's feet, so that he went  
Softly and still.

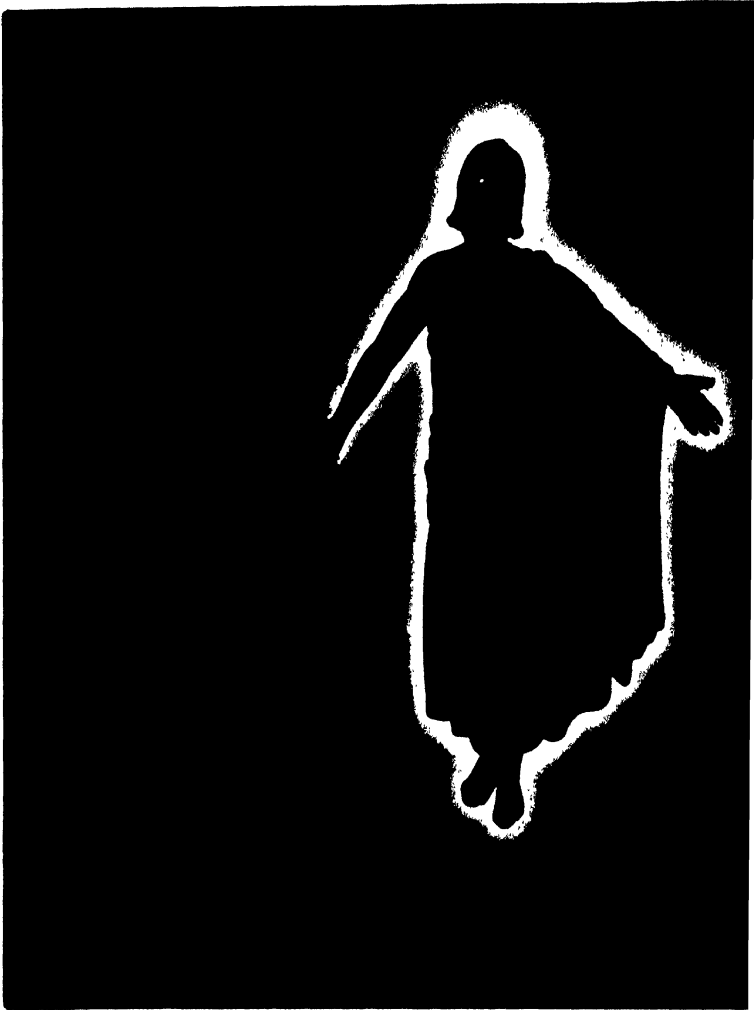
But when they reached the gate  
Of tripled brass—which hardly fivescore men  
Served to unbar and open—lo! the doors  
Rolled back all silently, though one might hear  
In daytime two koss off the thunderous roar  
Of those grim hinges and unwieldy plates.

Also the middle and the outer gates  
Unfolded each their monstrous portals thus  
In silence, as Siddârtha and his steed  
Drew near; while underneath their shadow lay,  
Silent as dead men, all those chosen guards—  
The lance and sword let fall, the shields unbraced,  
Captains and soldiers—for there came a wind,  
Drowsier than blows o'er Malwa's fields of sleep,  
Before the Prince's path, which, being breathed,  
Lulled every sense aswoon: and so he passed  
Free from the palace.

When the morning star  
Stood half a spear's length from the eastern rim,  
And o'er the earth the breath of morning sighed,  
Rippling Anoma's wave, the border-stream,  
Then drew he rein, and leaped to earth, and kissed

*And none hath sought for this as I will seek*







## BOOK THE FOURTH

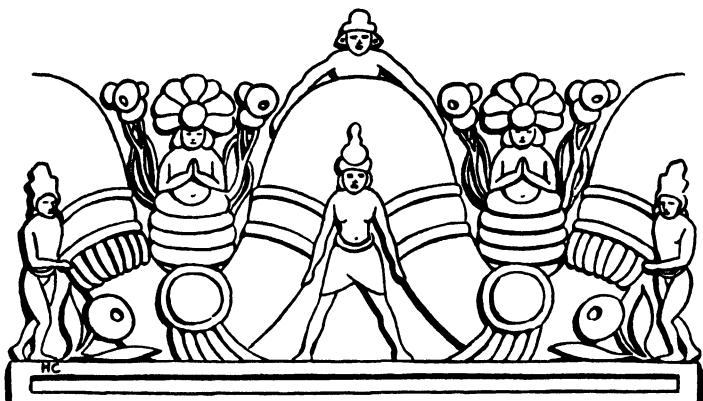
White Kantaka betwixt the ears, and spake  
Full sweet to Channa: 'This which thou hast done  
Shall bring thee good, and bring all creatures good:  
Be sure I love thee always for thy love.  
Lead back my horse, and take my crest-pearl here,  
My princely robes, which henceforth stead me not,  
My jewelled sword-belt and my sword, and these  
The long locks by its bright edge severed thus  
From off my brows. Give the King all, and say  
Siddârtha prays forget him till he come  
Ten times a Prince, with royal wisdom won  
From lonely searchings and the strife for light;  
Where, if I conquer, lo! all earth is mine—  
Mine by chief service!—tell him—mine by love!  
Since there is hope for man only in man,  
And none hath sought for this as I will seek,  
Who cast away my world to save my world.'



*BOOK THE FIFTH*







## BOOK THE FIFTH

ROUND Rajagriha five fair hills arose,  
Guarding King Bimbisâra's sylvan town:  
Baibhâra, green with lemon-grass and palms;  
Bipulla, at whose foot thin Sarsuti  
Steals with warm ripple; shadowy Tapovan,  
Whose steaming pools mirror black rocks, which ooze  
Sovereign earth-butter from their rugged roofs;  
South-east the vulture-peak Sailâgiri;  
And eastward Ratnagiri, hill of gems.  
A winding track, paven with footworn slabs,  
Leads thee, by safflower fields and bamboo tufts,  
Under dark mangoes and the jujube-trees,  
Past milk-white veins of rock and jasper crags,  
Low cliff and flats of jungle-flowers, to where  
The shoulder of that mountain, sloping west,  
O'erhangs a cave with wild figs canopied.  
Lo! thou who comest thither, bare thy feet

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

And bow thy head! for all this spacious earth  
Hath not a spot more dear and hallowed. Here  
Lord Buddha sate the scorching summers through,  
The driving rains, the chilly dawns and eves;  
Wearing for all men's sakes the yellow robe,  
Eating in beggar's guise the scanty meal  
Chance-gathered from the charitable; at night  
Couched on the grass, homeless, alone: while yelped  
The sleepless jackals round his cave, or coughs  
Of famished tiger from the thicket broke.  
By day and night here dwelt the World-honoured,  
Subduing that fair body born for bliss  
With fast and frequent watch and search intense  
Of silent meditation, so prolonged  
That oft-times while he mused—as motionless  
As the fixed rock his seat—the squirrel leaped  
Upon his knee, the timid quail led forth  
Her brood between his feet, and blue doves pecked  
The rice-grains from the bowl beside his hand.

Thus would he muse from noontide—when the  
land  
Shimmered with heat, and walls and temples danced  
In the reeking air—till sunset, noting not  
The blazing globe roll down, nor evening glide,  
Purple and swift, across the softened fields;  
Nor the still coming of the stars, nor throb  
Of drum-skins in the busy town, nor screech  
Of owl and night-jar; wholly wrapt from self  
In keen unravelling of the threads of thought  
And steadfast pacing of life's labyrinths.  
Thus would he sit still midnight hushed the world,

## BOOK THE FIFTH

Save where the beasts of darkness in the brake  
Crept and cried out, as fear and hatred cry,  
As lust and avarice and anger creep  
In the black jungles of man's ignorance.  
Then slept he for what space the fleet moon asks  
To swim a tenth part of her cloudy sea;  
But rose ere the False-dawn, and stood again  
Wistful on some dark platform of his hill,  
Watching the sleeping earth with ardent eyes  
And thoughts embracing all its living things;  
While o'er the waving fields that murmur moved  
Which is the kiss of Morn waking the lands,  
And in the east that miracle of Day  
Gathered and grew. At first a dusk so dim  
Night seems still unaware of whispered dawn,  
But soon—before the jungle-cock crows twice—  
A white verge clear, a widening, brightening white,  
High as the herald-star, which fades in floods  
Of silver, warming into pale gold, caught  
By topmost clouds, and flaming on their rims  
To fervent golden glow, flushed from the brink  
With saffron, scarlet, crimson, amethyst;  
Whereat the sky burns splendid to the blue,  
And, robed in raiment of glad light, the King  
Of Life and Glory cometh!

Then our Lord,  
After the manner of a Rishi, hailed  
The rising orb, and went—ablutions made—  
Down by the winding path unto the town;  
And in the fashion of a Rishi passed  
From street to street, with begging-bowl in hand,  
Gathering the little pittance of his needs.

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

Soon was it filled, for all the townsmen cried,  
'Take of our store, great sir!' and 'Take of ours!'  
Marking his godlike face and eyes enwraught;  
And mothers, when they saw our Lord go by,  
Would bid their children fall to kiss his feet,  
And lift his robe's hem to their brows, or run  
To fill his jar, and fetch him milk and cakes.  
And oftentimes as he paced, gentle and slow,  
Radiant with heavenly pity, lost in care  
For those he knew not, save as fellow-lives,  
The dark surprised eyes of some Indian maid  
Would dwell in sudden love and worship deep  
On that majestic form, as if she saw  
Her dreams of tenderest thought made true, and  
    grace  
Fairer than mortal fire her breast. But he  
Passed onward with the bowl and yellow robe,  
By mild speech paying all those gifts of hearts,  
Wending his way back to the solitudes  
To sit upon his hill with holy men,  
And hear and ask of wisdom and its roads.

Midway on Ratnagiri's groves of calm,  
Beyond the city, but below the caves,  
Lodged such as hold the body foe to soul,  
And flesh a beast which men must chain and tame  
With bitter pains, till sense of pain is killed,  
And tortured nerves vex torturer no more:  
Yogis and Brahmacharis, Bhikshus, all  
A gaunt and mournful band, dwelling apart.  
Some day and night had stood with lifted arms,  
Till—drained of blood and withered by disease—

## BOOK THE FIFTH

Their slowly wasting joints and stiffened limbs  
Jutted from sapless shoulders like dead forks  
From forest trunks. Others had clenched their hands  
So long and with so fierce a fortitude,  
The claw-like nails grew through the festered palm.  
Some walked on sandals spiked; some with sharp  
flints  
Gashed breast and brow and thigh, scarred these  
with fire,  
Threaded their flesh with jungle thorns and spits,  
Besmeared with mud and ashes, crouching foul  
In rags of dead men wrapped about their loins.  
Certain there were inhabited the spots  
Where death-pyres smouldered, cowering defiled  
With corpses for their company, and kites  
Screaming around them o'er the funeral-spoils:  
Certain who cried five hundred times a day  
The names of Shiva, knit with hissing snakes  
About their sun-tanned necks and hollow flanks,  
One palsied foot drawn up against the ham.  
So gathered they, a grievous company;  
Crowns blistered by the blazing heat, eyes bleared,  
Sinews and muscles shrivelled, visages  
Haggard and wan as slain men's, five days dead;  
Here crouched one in the dust who noon by noon  
Meted a thousand grains of millet out,  
Ate it with famished patience, seed by seed,  
And so starved on; there one who bruised his pulse  
With bitter leaves lest palate should be pleased;  
And next, a miserable saint self-maimed,  
Eyeless and tongueless, sexless, crippled, deaf;  
The body by the mind being thus stripped

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

For glory of much suffering, and the bliss  
Which they shall win—say holy books—whose woe  
Shames gods that send us woe, and makes men gods,  
Stronger to suffer than Hell is to harm.

Whom sadly eyeing spake our Lord to one,  
Chief of the woe-begones: 'Much-suffering sir!  
These many moons I dwell upon the hill—  
Who am a seeker of the Truth—and see  
My brothers here, and thee, so piteously  
Self-anguished; wherefore add ye ills to life,  
Which is so evil?'

Answer made the sage:

'Tis written if a man shall mortify  
His flesh, till pain be grown the life he lives  
And death voluptuous rest, such woes shall purge  
Sin's dross away, and the soul, purified,  
Soar from the furnace of its sorrow, winged  
For glorious spheres and splendour past all thought.'

'Yon cloud which floats in heaven,' the Prince  
replied,  
'Wreathed like gold cloth around your Indra's  
throne,  
Rose thither from the tempest-driven sea;  
But it must fall again in tearful drops,  
Trickling through rough and painful water-ways  
By cleft and nullah and the muddy flood,  
To Gunga and the sea, wherefrom it sprang.  
Know'st thou, my brother, if it be not thus,  
After their many pains, with saints in bliss?  
Since that which rises falls, and that which buys

BOOK THE FIFTH

Is spent; and if ye buy heav'n with your blood  
In hell's hard market, when the bargain's through  
The toil begins again!

‘It may begin,’

The hermit moaned. ‘Alas! we know not this,  
Nor surely anything; yet after night  
Day comes, and after turmoil peace, and we  
Hate this accursed flesh which clogs the soul  
That fain would rise; so, for the sake of soul,  
We stake brief agonies in game with gods  
To gain the larger joys.’

‘Yet if they last

A myriad years,’ he said, ‘they fade at length,  
Those joys; or if not, is there then some life  
Below, above, beyond, so unlike life  
It will not change? Speak! do your gods endure  
For ever, brothers?’

‘Nay,’ the Yogis said,

‘Only great Brahm endures: the gods but live.’

Then spake Lord Buddha: ‘Will ye, being wise,  
As ye seem holy and strong-hearted ones,  
Throw these sore dice, which are your groans and  
moans,  
For gains which may be dreams, and must have end?  
Will ye, for love of soul, so loathe your flesh,  
So scourge and maim it, that it shall not serve  
To bear the spirit on, searching for home,  
But founder on the track before nightfall,  
Like willing steed o'er-spurred? Will ye, sad sirs!  
Dismantle and dismember this fair house,  
Where we have come to dwell by painful pasts;



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Whose windows give us light—the little light—  
Whereby we gaze abroad to know if dawn  
Will break, and whither winds the better road?’

Then cried they, ‘We have chosen this for road  
And tread it, Rajaputra! till the close—  
Though all its stones were fire—in trust of death.  
Speak, if thou know’st a way more excellent;  
If not, peace go with thee!’

Onward he passed,  
Exceeding sorrowful, seeing how men  
Fear so to die they are afraid to fear,  
Lust so to live they dare not love their life,  
But plague it with fierce penances, belike  
To please the gods who grudge pleasure to man:  
Belike to baulk hell by self-kindled hells;  
Belike in holy madness, hoping soul  
May break the better through their wasted flesh.  
‘Oh, flowerets of the field!’ Siddârtha said,  
‘Who turn your tender faces to the sun—  
Glad of the light, and grateful with sweet breath  
Of fragrance and these robes of reverence donned,  
Silver and gold and purple—none of ye  
Miss perfect living, none of ye despoil  
Your happy beauty. Oh, ye palms! which rise  
Eager to pierce the sky and drink the wind  
Blown from Malaya and the cool blue seas,  
What secret know ye that ye grow content,  
From time of tender shoot to time of fruit,  
Murmuring such sun-songs from your feathered  
crowns?  
Ye, too, who dwell so merry in the trees—

## BOOK THE FIFTH

Quick-darting parrots, bee-birds, bulbuls, doves—  
None of ye hate your life, none of ye deem  
To strain to better by foregoing needs!  
But man, who slays ye—being lord—is wise,  
And wisdom, nursed on blood, cometh thus forth  
In self-tormentings!

While the Master spake,  
Blew down the mount the dust of pattering feet,  
White goats and black sheep winding slow their way,  
With many a lingering nibble at the tufts,  
And wanderings from the path, where water gleamed  
Or wild figs hung. But always as they strayed  
The herdsman cried, or slung his sling, and kept  
The silly crowd still moving to the plain.  
A ewe with couplets in the flock there was,  
Some hurt had lamed one lamb, which toiled behind  
Bleeding, while in the front its fellow skipped,  
And the vexed dam hither and thither ran,  
Fearful to lose this little one or that;  
Which when our Lord did mark, full tenderly  
He took the limping lamb upon his neck,  
Saying, 'Poor woolly mother, be at peace!  
Whither thou goest I will bear thy care;  
'Twere all as good to ease one beast of grief  
As sit and watch the sorrows of the world  
In yonder caverns with the priests who pray.'

'But,' spake he to the herdsmen, 'wherefore,  
friends!

Drive ye the flocks adown under high noon,  
Since 'tis at evening that men fold their sheep?'  
And answer gave the peasants: 'We are sent

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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To fetch a sacrifice of goats five-score,  
And five-score sheep, the which our Lord the King  
Slayeth this night in worship of his gods.'  
Then said the Master: 'I will also go!  
So paced he patiently, bearing the lamb  
Beside the herdsmen in the dust and sun,  
The wistful ewe low bleating at his feet.

Whom, when they came unto the river-side,  
A woman—dove-eyed, young, with tearful face  
And lifted hands—saluted, bending low:  
'Lord! thou art he,' she said, 'who yesterday  
Had pity on me in the fig-grove here,  
Where I live lone and reared my child; but he  
Straying amid the blossoms found a snake,  
Which twined about his wrist, whilst he did laugh  
And tease the quick-forked tongue and opened mouth  
Of that cold playmate. But, alas! ere long  
He turned so pale and still, I could not think  
Why he should cease to play and let my breast  
Fall from his lips. And one said, "He is sick  
Of poison"; and another, "He will die."  
But I, who could not lose my precious boy,  
Prayed of them physic, which might bring the light  
Back to his eyes; it was so very small,  
That kiss-mark of the serpent, and I think  
It could not hate him, gracious as he was,  
Nor hurt him in his sport. And some one said,  
"There is a holy man upon the hill—  
Lo! now he passeth in the yellow robe—  
Ask of the Rishi if there be a cure  
For that which ails thy son." Whereon I came

*A woman—dove-eyed, young*







BOOK THE FIFTH

Trembling to thee, whose brow is like a god's,  
And wept and drew the face-cloth from my babe,  
Praying thee tell what simples might be good.  
And thou, great sir! didst spurn me not, but gaze  
With gentle eyes and touch with patient hand;  
Then draw the face-cloth back, saying to me,  
"Yea! little sister, there is that might heal  
Thee first, and him, if thou couldst fetch the thing;  
For they who seek physicians bring to them  
What is ordained. Therefore, I pray thee, find  
Black mustard-seed, a tola; only mark  
Thou take it not from any hand or house  
Where father, mother, child, or slave hath died:  
It shall be well if thou canst find such seed."  
Thus didst thou speak, my Lord!

The Master smiled  
Exceeding tenderly. 'Yea! I spake thus,  
Dear Kisagôtami! But didst thou find  
The seed?'

'I went, Lord, clasping to my breast  
The babe, grown colder, asking at each hut—  
Here in the jungle and towards the town—  
"I pray you, give me mustard, of your grace,  
A tola—black"; and each who had it gave,  
For all the poor are piteous to the poor;  
But when I asked, "in my friend's household here  
Hath any peradventure ever died—  
Husband, or wife, or child, or slave?" they said:  
"O Sister! what is this you ask? the dead  
Are very many, and the living few!"  
So with sad thanks I gave the mustard back,  
And prayed of others; but the others said,



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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“Here is the seed, but we have lost our slave!”

“Here is the seed, but our good man is dead!”

“Here is some seed, but he that sowed it died  
Between the rain-time and the harvesting!”

Ah, sir! I could not find a single house

Where there was mustard-seed and none had died!

Therefore I left my child—who would not suck  
Nor smile—beneath the wild-vines by the stream,

To seek thy face and kiss thy feet, and pray

Where I might find this seed and find no death,

If now, indeed, my baby be not dead,

As I do fear, and as they said to me.’

‘My sister! thou hast found,’ the Master said,

‘Searching for what none finds—that bitter balm

I had to give thee. He thou lovedst slept

Dead on thy bosom yesterday: to-day

Thou know’st the whole wide world weeps with thy  
woe:

The grief which all hearts share grows less for one.

Lo! I would pour my blood if it could stay

Thy tears and win the secret of that curse

Which makes sweet love our anguish, and which  
drives—

O’er flowers and pastures to the sacrifice—

As these dumb beasts are driven—men their lords.

I seek that secret: bury thou thy child!’

So entered they the city side by side,

The herdsmen and the Prince, what time the sun

Gilded slow Sona’s distant stream, and threw

Long shadows down the street and through the gate

## BOOK THE FIFTH

Where the King's men kept watch. But when these saw  
Our Lord bearing the lamb, the guards stood back,  
The market-people drew their wains aside,  
In the bazaar buyers and sellers stayed  
The war of tongues to gaze on that mild face;  
The smith, with lifted hammer in his hand,  
Forgot to strike; the weaver left his web,  
The scribe his scroll, the money-changer lost  
His count of cowries; from the unwatched rice  
Shiva's white bull fed free; the wasted milk  
Ran o'er the lota while the milkers watched  
The passage of our Lord moving so meek,  
With yet so beautiful a majesty.

But most the women gathering in the doors  
Asked, 'Who is this that brings the sacrifice  
So graceful and peace-giving as he goes?  
What is his caste? whence hath he eyes so sweet?  
Can he be Sâkra or the Devaraj?'  
And others said, 'It is the holy man  
Who dwelleth with the Rishis on the hill.'  
But the Lord paced, in meditation lost,  
Thinking, 'Alas! for all my sheep which have  
No shepherd; wandering in the night with none  
To guide them; bleating blindly towards the knife  
Of Death, as these dumb beasts which are their kin.'

Then some one told the King, 'There cometh here  
A holy hermit, bringing down the flock  
Which thou didst bid to crown thy sacrifice.'

The King stood in his hall of offering,  
On either hand the white-robed Brahmans ranged

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

Muttered their mantras, feeding still the fire  
Which roared upon the midmost altar. There  
From scented woods flickered bright tongues of  
flame,

Hissing and curling as they licked the gifts  
Of ghee and spices and the Soma juice,  
The joy of Indra. Round about the pile  
A slow, thick, scarlet streamlet smoked and ran,  
Sucked by the sand, but ever rolling down,  
The blood of bleating victims. One such lay,  
A spotted goat, long-horned, its head bound back  
With munja grass; at its stretched throat the knife  
Pressed by a priest, who murmured, 'This, dread  
gods,

Of many yajnas cometh as the crown  
From Bimbisâra: take ye joy to see  
The spirted blood, and pleasure in the scent  
Of rich flesh roasting 'mid the fragrant flames;  
Let the King's sins be laid upon this goat,  
And let the fire consume them burning it,  
For now I strike.'

But Buddha softly said,  
'Let him not strike, great King!' and therewith loosed  
The victim's bonds, none staying him, so great  
His presence was. Then, craving leave, he spake  
Of life, which all can take but none can give,  
Life which all creatures love and strive to keep,  
Wonderful, dear, and pleasant unto each,  
Even to the meanest; yea, a boon to all  
Where pity is, for pity makes the world  
Soft to the weak and noble for the strong.  
Unto the dumb lips of his flock he lent

## BOOK THE FIFTH

Sad pleading words, showing how man, who prays  
For mercy to the gods, is merciless,  
Being as god to those; albeit all life  
Is linked and kin, and what we slay have given  
Meek tribute of the milk and wool, and set  
Fast trust upon the hands which murder them.  
Also he spake of what the holy books  
Do surely teach, how that at death some sink  
To bird and beast, and these rise up to man  
In wanderings of the spark which grows purged  
flame.

So were the sacrifice new sin, if so  
The fated passage of a soul be stayed.  
Nor, spake he, shall one wash his spirit clean  
By blood; nor gladden gods, being good, with blood;  
Nor bribe them, being evil; nay, nor lay  
Upon the brow of innocent bound beasts  
One hair's weight of that answer all must give  
For all things done amiss or wrongfully,  
Alone, each for himself, reckoning with that  
The fixed arithmic of the universe,  
Which meteth good for good and ill for ill,  
Measure for measure, unto deeds, words, thoughts;  
Watchful, aware, implacable, unmoved;  
Making all futures fruits of all the pasts.  
Thus spake he, breathing words so piteous,  
With such high lordliness of ruth and right,  
The priests drew down their garments o'er the hands  
Crimsoned with slaughter, and the King came near,  
Standing with clasped palms reverencing Buddh;  
While still our Lord went on, teaching how fair  
This earth were if all living things be linked

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

In friendliness and common use of foods,  
Bloodless and pure; the golden grain, bright fruits,  
Sweet herbs which grow for all, the waters wan,  
Sufficient drinks and meats. Which when these  
heard,

The might of gentleness so conquered them,  
The priests themselves scattered their altar-flames  
And flung away the steel of sacrifice;

And through the land next day passed a decree  
Proclaimed by criers, and in this wise graved  
On rock and column: 'Thus the King's will is:—  
There hath been slaughter for the sacrifice  
And slaying for the meat, but henceforth none  
Shall spill the blood of life nor taste of flesh,  
Seeing that knowledge grows, and life is one,  
And mercy cometh to the merciful.'

So ran the edict, and from those days forth  
Sweet peace hath spread between all living kind,  
Man and the beasts which serve him, and the birds,  
On all those banks of Gunga where our Lord  
Taught with his saintly pity and soft speech.

For aye so piteous was the Master's heart  
To all that breathe this breath of fleeting life,  
Yoked in one fellowship of joys and pains,  
That it is written in the holy books  
How, in an ancient age—when Buddha wore  
A Brahman's form, dwelling upon the rock  
Named Munda, by the village of Dâlidd—  
Drought withered all the land: the young rice died  
Ere it could hide a quail; in forest glades  
A fierce sun sucked the pools; grasses and herbs

## BOOK THE FIFTH

Sickened, and all the woodland creatures fled  
Scattering for sustenance. At such a time,  
Between the hot walls of a nullah, stretched  
On naked stones, our Lord spied, as he passed,  
A starving tigress. Hunger in her orbs  
Glared with green flame; her dry tongue lolled a span  
Beyond the gasping jaws and shrivelled jowl:  
Her painted hide hung wrinkled on her ribs,  
As when between the rafters sinks a thatch  
Rotten with rains; and at the poor lean dugs  
Two cubs, whining with famine, tugged and sucked,  
Mumbling those milkless teats which rendered  
nought;

While she, their gaunt dam, licked full motherly  
The clamorous twins, and gave her flank to them  
With moaning throat, and love stronger than want,  
Softening the first of that wild cry wherewith  
She laid her famished muzzle to the sand  
And roared a savage thunder-peal of woe.  
Seeing which bitter strait, and heeding nought  
Save the immense compassion of a Buddh,  
Our Lord bethought: 'There is no other way  
To help this murderess of the woods but one.  
By sunset these will die, having no meat:  
There is no living heart will pity her,  
Bloody with ravin, lean for lack of blood.  
Lo! if I feed her, who shall lose but I,  
And how can love lose doing of its kind  
Even to the uttermost?' So saying, Buddh  
Silently laid aside sandals and staff,  
His sacred thread, turban, and cloth, and came  
Forth from behind the milk-bush on the sand,

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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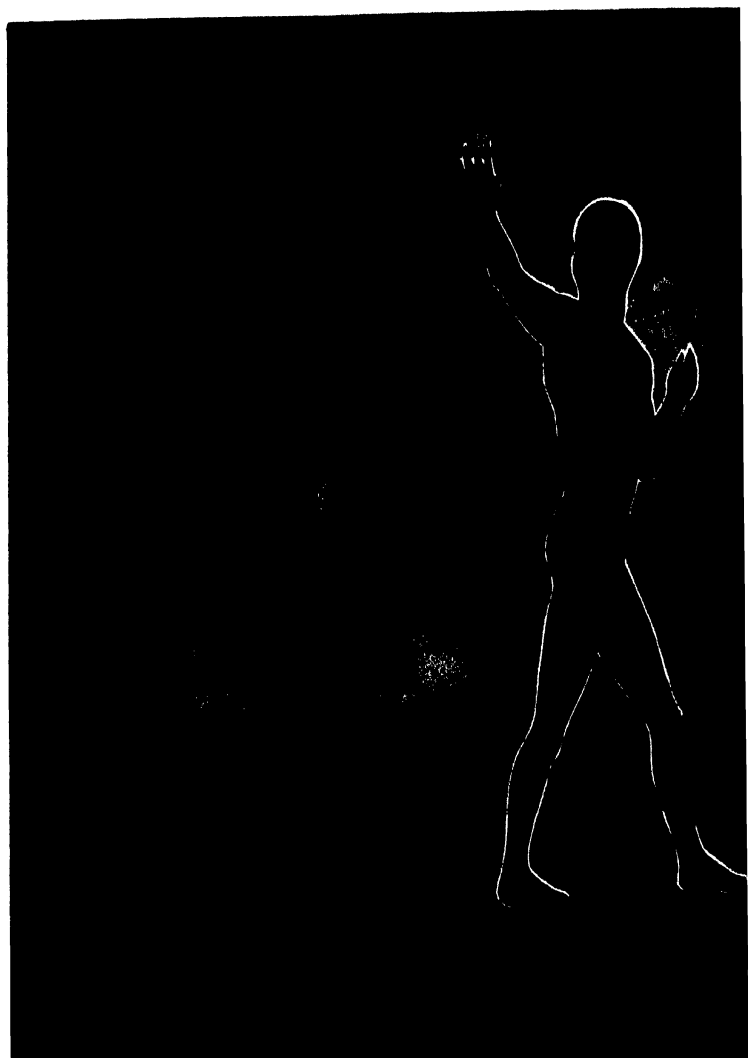
Saying, 'Ho! mother, here is meat for thee!'  
Whereat the perishing beast yelped hoarse and shrill,  
Sprang from her cubs, and, hurling to the earth  
That willing victim, had her feast of him  
With all the crooked daggers of her claws  
Rending his flesh, and all her yellow fangs  
Bathed in his blood: the great cat's burning breath  
Mixed with the last sigh of such fearless love.

Thus large the Master's heart was long ago,  
Not only now, when with his gracious ruth  
He bade cease cruel worship of the gods.  
And much King Bimbisâra prayed our Lord—  
Learning his royal birth and holy search—  
To tarry in that city, saying oft,  
'Thy princely state may not abide such fasts;  
Thy hands were made for sceptres, not for alms.  
Sojourn with me, who have no son to rule,  
And teach my kingdom wisdom, till I die,  
Lodged in my palace with a beauteous bride.'  
But ever spake Siddârtha, of set mind:  
'These things I had, most noble King, and left,  
Seeking the truth; which still I seek, and shall;  
Not to be stayed though Sâkra's palace ope'd  
Its doors of pearl and Devîs wooed me in.  
I go to build the Kingdom of the Law,  
Journeying to Gaya and the forest shades,  
Where, as I think, the light will come to me;  
For nowise here among the Rishis comes  
That light, nor from the Shasters, nor from fasts  
Borne till the body faints, starved by the soul.  
Yet there is light to reach and truth to win;

*Forth from behind the milk-bush*









BOOK THE FIFTH

And surely, O true Friend, if I attain  
I will return and quit thy love.'

Thereat

Thrice round the Prince King Bimbisâra paced,  
Reverently bending to the Master's feet,  
And bade him speed. So passed our Lord away  
Towards Uravilva, not yet comforted,  
And wan of face, and weak with six years' quest.  
But they upon the hill and in the grove—  
Alâra, Udra, and the ascetics five—  
Had stayed him, saying all was written clear  
In holy Shasters, and that none might win  
Higher than *Sruti* and than *Smriti*—nay,  
Not the chief saints!—for how should mortal man  
Be wiser than the Jnana-Kând, which tells  
That Brahm is bodiless and actionless,  
Passionless, calm, unqualified, unchanged,  
Pure life, pure thought, pure joy? Or how should  
man

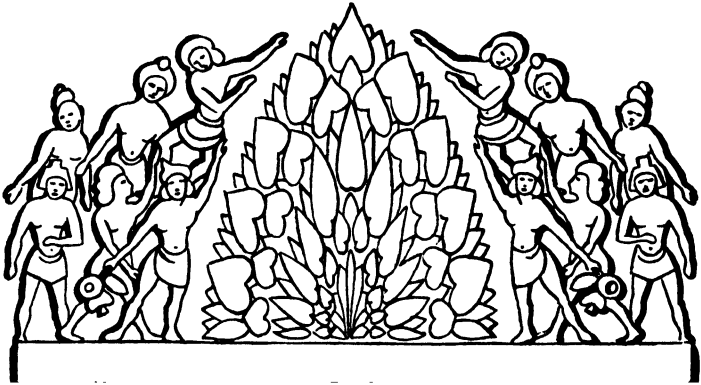
Be better than the Karmma-Kând, which shows  
How he may strip passion and action off,  
Break from the bond of self, and so, unsphered,  
Be God, and melt into the vast divine;  
Flying from false to true, from wars of sense  
To peace eternal, where the Silence lives?

But the Prince heard them, not yet comforted.



*BOOK THE SIXTH*





## BOOK THE SIXTH

THOU, who wouldst see where dawned the light at  
last,  
North-westwards from the 'Thousand Gardens' go  
By Gunga's valley till thy steps be set  
On the green hills where those twin streamlets spring,  
Nilâjan and Mohâna; follow them,  
Winding beneath broad-leaved mahûa-trees,  
'Mid thickets of the sansâr and the bir,  
Till on the plain the shining sisters meet  
In Phalgu's bed, flowing by rocky banks  
To Gâya and the red Barabar hills.  
Hard by that river spreads a thorny waste,  
Uruwelaya named in ancient days,  
With sandhills broken; on its verge a wood  
Waves sea-green plumes and tassels thwart the sky,  
With undergrowth wherethrough a still flood steals,  
Dappled with lotus-blossoms, blue and white,



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

And peopled with quick fish and tortoises.  
Near it the village of Senâni reared  
Its roofs of grass, nestled amid the palms,  
Peaceful with simple folk and pastoral toils.

There in the sylvan solitudes once more  
Lord Buddha lived, musing the woes of men,  
The ways of fate, the doctrines of the books,  
The lessons of the creatures of the brake,  
The secrets of the silence whence all come,  
The secrets of the gloom whereto all go,  
The life which lies between, like that arch flung  
From cloud to cloud across the sky, which hath  
Mists for its masonry and vapoury piers,  
Melting to void again which was so fair  
With sapphire hues, garnet, and chrysoptase.  
Moon after moon our Lord sate in the wood,  
So meditating these that he forgot  
Ofttimes the hour of food, rising from thoughts  
Prolonged beyond the sunrise and the noon,  
To see his bowl unfilled, and eat perforce  
Of wild fruit fallen from the boughs o'erhead,  
Shaken to earth by chattering ape or plucked  
By purple paroquet. Therefore his grace  
Faded; his body, worn by stress of soul,  
Lost day by day the marks, thirty and two,  
Which testify the Buddha. Scarce that leaf,  
Fluttering so dry and withered to his feet  
From off the sâl-branch, bore less likeness  
Of spring's soft greenery than he of him  
Who was the princely flower of all his land.

## BOOK THE SIXTH

And once, at such a time, the o'erwrought Prince  
Fell to the earth in deadly swoon, all spent,  
Even as one slain, who hath no longer breath  
Nor any stir of blood; so wan he was,  
So motionless. But there came by that way  
A shepherd-boy, who saw Siddârtha lie  
With lids fast-closed, and lines of nameless pain  
Fixed on his lips—the fiery noonday sun  
Beating upon his head—who, plucking boughs  
From wild rose-apple trees, knitted them thick  
Into a bower to shade the sacred face.  
Also he poured upon the Master's lips  
Drops of warm milk, pressed from his she-goat's bag,  
Lest, being low caste, he, by touching, wrong one  
So high and holy seeming. But the books  
Tell how the jambu-branches, planted thus,  
Shot with quick life, in wealth of leaf and flower,  
And glowing fruitage interlaced and close,  
So that the bower grew like a tent of silk  
Pitched for a king at hunting, decked with studs  
Of silver-work and bosses of red gold.  
And the boy worshipped, deeming him some god;  
But our Lord gaining breath, arose and asked  
Milk in the shepherd's lota. 'Ah, my Lord,  
I cannot give thee,' quoth the lad; 'thou seest  
I am a Sudra, and my touch defiles!'  
Then the World-honoured spake: 'Pity and need  
Make all flesh kin. There is no caste in blood,  
Which runneth of one hue, nor caste in tears,  
Which trickle salt with all; neither comes man  
To birth with tilka-mark stamped on the brow,  
Nor sacred thread on neck. Who doth right deed

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Is twice-born, and who doeth ill deeds vile.  
Give me to drink, my brother; when I come  
Unto my quest it shall be good for thee.'  
Thereat the peasant's heart was glad, and gave.

And on another day there passed that road  
A band of tinselled girls, the nautch-dancers  
Of Indra's temple in the town, with those  
Who made their music—one that beat a drum  
Set round with peacock-feathers, one that blew  
The piping bānsuli, and one that twitched  
A three-string sitar. Lightly tripped they down  
From ledge to ledge and through the chequered  
paths

To some gay festival, the silver bells  
Chiming soft peals about the small brown feet,  
Armlets and wrist-rings tattling answer shrill;  
While he that bore the sitar thrummed and twanged  
His threads of brass, and she beside him sang—

*'Fair goes the dancing when the sitar's tuned;  
Tune us the sitar neither low nor high,  
And we will dance away the hearts of men.*

*The string o'erstretched breaks, and the music flies;  
The string o'er slack is dumb, and music dies;  
Tune us the sitar neither low nor high.'*

So sang the nautch-girl to the pipe and wires,  
Fluttering like some vain, painted butterfly  
From glade to glade along the forest path,  
Nor dreamed her light words echoed on the ear

*Fell to the earth in a deadly swoon*







BOOK THE SIXTH

Of him, that holy man, who sate so rapt  
Under the fig-tree by the path. But Buddh  
Lifted his great brow as the wantons passed,  
And spake: 'The foolish oft-times teach the wise;  
I strain too much this string of life, belike,  
Meaning to make such music as shall save.  
Mine eyes are dim now that they see the truth,  
My strength is waned now that my need is most;  
Would that I had such help as man must have,  
For I shall die, whose life was all men's hope.'

Now, by that river dwelt a landholder  
Pious and rich, master of many herds,  
A goodly chief, the friend of all the poor;  
And from his house the village drew its name—  
'Senâni.' Pleasant and in peace he lived,  
Having for wife Sujâta, loveliest  
Of all the dark-eyed daughters of the plain;  
Gentle and true, simple and kind was she,  
Noble of mien, with gracious speech to all  
And gladsome looks—a pearl of womanhood—  
Passing calm years of household happiness  
Beside her lord in that still Indian home,  
Save that no male child blessed their wedded love.  
Wherefore, with many prayers she had besought  
Lukshmi; and many nights at full moon gone  
Round the great Lingam, nine times nine, with gifts  
Of rice and jasmine wreaths and sandal oil  
Praying a boy; also Sujâta vowed—  
If this should be—an offering of food  
Unto the Wood-God, plenteous, delicate,  
Set in a bowl of gold under his tree,



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Such as the lips of Devs may taste and take.  
And this had been: for there was born to her  
A beauteous boy, now three months old, who lay  
Between Sujâta's breasts, while she did pace  
With grateful footsteps to the Wood-God's shrine,  
One arm clasping her crimson sari close  
To wrap the babe, that jewel of her joys,  
The other lifted high in comely curve  
To steady on her head the bowl and dish  
Which held the dainty victuals for the God.

But Radha, sent before to sweep the ground  
And tie the scarlet threads around the tree,  
Came eager, crying, 'Ah, dear Mistress! look.  
There is the Wood-God sitting in his place,  
Revealed, with folded hands upon his knees.  
See how the light shines round about his brow!  
How mild and great he seems, with heavenly eyes!  
Good fortune is it thus to meet the gods.'

So,—thinking him divine,—Sujâta drew  
Tremblingly nigh, and kissed the earth and said,  
With sweet face bent, 'Would that the Holy One  
Inhabiting this grove, Giver of good,  
Merciful unto me his handmaiden,  
Vouchsafing now his presence, might accept  
These our poor gifts of snowy curds, fresh made  
With milk as white as new-carved ivory!'

Therewith into the golden bowl she poured  
The curds and milk, and on the hands of Buddh  
Dropped attar from a crystal flask—distilled

BOOK THE SIXTH

Out of the hearts of roses: and he ate,  
Speaking no word, while the glad mother stood  
In reverence apart. But of that meal  
So wondrous was the virtue that our Lord  
Felt strength and life return as though the nights  
Of watching and the days of fast had passed  
In dream, as though the spirit with the flesh  
Shared that fine meat and plumed its wings anew,  
Like some delighted bird at sudden streams  
Weary with flight o'er endless wastes of sand,  
Which laves the desert dust from neck and crest.  
And more Sujâta worshipped, seeing our Lord  
Grow fairer and his countenance more bright:  
'Art thou indeed the God?' she lowly asked,  
'And hath my gift found favour?'

But Buddh said,

'What is it thou dost bring me?'

'Holy One!'

Answered Sujâta, 'from our droves I took  
Milk of a hundred mothers, newly-calved,  
And with that milk I fed fifty white cows,  
And with their milk twenty-and-five, and then  
With theirs twelve more, and yet again with theirs  
The six noblest and best of all our herds.  
That yield I boiled with sandal and fine spice  
In silver lotus, adding rice, well grown  
From chosen seed, set in new-broken ground,  
So picked that every grain was like a pearl.  
This did I of true heart, because I vowed  
Under thy tree, if I should bear a boy  
I would make offering for my joy, and now  
I have my son, and all my life is bliss!'

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Softly our Lord drew down the crimson fold,  
And, laying on the little head those hands  
Which help the worlds, he said, 'Long be thy bliss!  
And lightly fall on him the load of life!  
For thou hast holpen me who am no God,  
But one, thy Brother; heretofore a Prince  
And now a wanderer, seeking night and day  
These six hard years that light which somewhere  
shines

To lighten all men's darkness, if they knew!  
And I shall find the light; yea, now it dawned  
Glorious and helpful, when my weak flesh failed  
Which this pure food, fair Sister, hath restored,  
Drawn manifold through lives to quicken life  
As life itself passes by many births  
To happier heights and purging off of sins.  
Yet dost thou truly find it sweet enough  
Only to live? Can life and love suffice?'

Answered Sujâta, 'Worshipful! my heart  
Is little, and a little rain will fill  
The lily's cup which hardly moistens the field.  
It is enough for me to feel life's sun  
Shine in my Lord's grace and my baby's smile,  
Making the loving summer of our home.  
Pleasant my days pass filled with household cares  
From sunrise when I wake to praise the gods,  
And give forth grain, and trim the walsi-plant,  
And set my handmaids to their tasks, till noon,  
When my Lord lays his head upon my lap  
Lulled by soft songs and wavings of the fan;  
And so to supper-time at quiet eve,

BOOK THE SIXTH

When by his side I stand and serve the cakes.  
Then the stars light their silver lamps for sleep,  
After the temple and the talk with friends.  
How should I not be happy, blest so much,  
And bearing him this boy whose tiny hand  
Shall lead his soul to Swarga, if it need?  
For holy books teach when a man shall plant  
Trees for the travellers' shade, and dig a well  
For the folks' comfort, and beget a son,  
It shall be good for such after their death;  
And what the books say that I humbly take,  
Being not wiser than those great of old  
Who spake with gods, and knew the hymns and  
    charms,  
And all the ways of virtue and of peace.  
Also I think that good must come of good  
And ill of evil—surely—unto all—  
In every place and time—seeing sweet fruit  
Groweth from wholesome roots, and bitter things  
From poison stocks; yea, seeing, too, how spite  
Breeds hate, and kindness friends, and patience peace  
Even while we live; and when 'tis willed we die  
Shall there not be as good a "Then" as "Now"?  
Haply much better! since one grain of rice  
Shoots a green feather gemmed with fifty pearls,  
And all the starry champak's white and gold  
Lurks in those little, naked, grey spring-buds.  
Ah, Sir! I know there might be woes to bear  
Would lay fond Patience with her face in dust.  
If this my babe pass first I think my heart  
Would break—almost I hope my heart would break;  
That I might clasp him dead and wait my Lord—

In whatsoever world holds faithful wives—  
Duteous, attending till his hour should come.  
But if Death called Senâni, I should mount  
The pile and lay that dear head in my lap,  
My daily way, rejoicing when the torch  
Lit the quick flame and rolled the choking smoke.  
For it is written if an Indian wife  
Die so, her love shall give her husband's soul  
For every hair upon her head a crore  
Of years in Swarga. Therefore fear I not;  
And therefore, Holy Sir! my life is glad,  
Nowise forgetting yet those other lives  
Painful and poor, wicked and miserable,  
Whereon the gods grant pity! But for me,  
What good I see humbly I seek to do,  
And live obedient to the law, in trust  
That what will come, and must come, shall come  
well.'

Then spake our Lord, 'Thou teachest them who  
teach,  
Wiser than wisdom in thy simple lore.  
Be thou content to know not, knowing thus  
Thy way of right and duty: grow, thou flower!  
With thy sweet kind in peaceful shade—the light  
Of Truth's high noon is not for tender leaves  
Which must spread broad in other suns, and lift  
In later lives a crowned head to the sky.  
Thou who hast worshipped me, I worship thee!  
Excellent heart! learnèd unknowingly,  
As the dove is which flieth home by love.  
In thee is seen why there is hope for man

## BOOK THE SIXTH

And where we hold the wheel of life at will.  
Peace go with thee, and comfort all thy days!  
As thou accomplishest, may I achieve!  
He whom thou thoughtest God bids thee wish this.

'Mayest thou achieve!' she said, with earnest eyes  
Bent on her babe; who reached its tender hands  
To Buddh—knowing, belike, as children know,  
More than we deem, and reverencing our Lord;  
But he arose—made strong with that pure meat—  
And bent his footsteps where a great Tree grew,  
The Bôdhi-tree (thenceforward in all years  
Never to fade, and ever to be kept  
In homage of the world), beneath whose leaves  
It was ordained the Truth should come to Buddh:  
Which now the Master knew; wherefore he went  
With measured pace, steadfast, majestic,  
Unto the Tree of Wisdom. Oh, ye Worlds!  
Rejoice! our Lord wended unto the Tree!

Whom—as he passed into its ample shade,  
Cloistered with columned dropping stems, and roofed  
With vaults of glistening green—the conscious earth  
Worshipped with waving grass and sudden flush  
Of flowers about his feet. The forest-boughs  
Bent down to shade him; from the river sighed  
Cool wafts of wind laden with lotus-scents  
Breathed by the water-gods. Large wondering eyes  
Of woodland creatures—panther, boar, and deer—  
At peace that eve, gazed on his face benign  
From cave and thicket. From its cold cleft wound  
The mottled deadly snake, dancing its hood

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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In honour of our Lord; bright butterflies  
Fluttered their vans, azure and green and gold,  
To be his fan-bearers; the fierce kite dropped  
Its prey and screamed; the striped palm-squirrel  
raced

From stem to stem to see; the weaver bird  
Chirped from her swinging nest; the lizard ran;  
The koil sang her hymn; the doves flocked round;  
Even the creeping things were 'ware and glad.  
Voices of earth and air joined in one song,  
Which unto ears that hear said, 'Lord and Friend!  
Lover and Saviour! Thou who hast subdued  
Angers and prides, desires and fears and doubts,  
Thou that for each and all hast given thyself,  
Pass to the Tree! The sad world blesseth thee  
Who art the Buddh that shall assuage her woes.  
Pass, Hailed and Honoured! strive thy last for us,  
King and high Conqueror! thine hour is come;  
This is the Night the ages waited for!'

Then fell the night, even as our Master sate  
Under that Tree. But he who is the Prince  
Of Darkness, Mara—knowing this was Buddh  
Who should deliver men, and now the hour  
When he should find the Truth and save the worlds—  
Gave unto all his evil powers command.

Wherefore there trooped from every deepest pit  
The fiends who war with Wisdom and the Light,  
Arati, Trishna, Raga, and their crew  
Of passions, horrors, ignorances, lusts,  
The brood of gloom and dread; all hating Buddh,  
Seeking to shake his mind; nor knoweth one,  
Not even the wisest, how those fiends of Hell

## BOOK THE SIXTH

Battled that night to keep the Truth from Buddh:  
Sometimes with terrors of the tempest, blasts  
Of demon-armies clouding all the wind  
With thunder, and with blinding lightning flung  
In jagged javelins of purple wrath  
From splitting skies; sometimes with wiles and words  
Fair-sounding, 'mid hushed leaves and softened airs  
From shapes of witching beauty; wanton songs,  
Whispers of love; sometimes with royal allures  
Of proffered rule; sometimes with mocking doubts,  
Making truth vain. But whether these befell  
Without and visible, or whether Buddh  
Strove with fell spirits in his inmost heart,  
Judge ye:—I write what ancient books have writ.

The ten chief Sins came—Mara's mighty ones,  
Angels of evil—Attavâda first,  
The Sin of Self, who in the Universe  
As in a mirror sees her fond face shown,  
And, crying 'I,' would have the world say 'I,'  
And all things perish so if she endure.  
'If thou be'st Buddh,' she said, 'let others grope  
Lightless; it is enough that Thou art Thou  
Changelessly; rise and take the bliss of gods  
Who change not, heed not, strive not.' But Buddh  
spake,  
'The right in thee is base, the wrong a curse;  
Cheat such as love themselves.' Then came wan  
Doubt,  
He that denies—the mocking Sin—and this  
Hissed in the Master's ear, 'All things are shows,  
And vain the knowledge of their vanity;



Thou dost but chase the shadow of thyself;  
Rise and go hence, there is no better way  
Than patient scorn, nor any help for man,  
Nor any staying of his whirling wheel.'

But quoth our Lord, 'Thou hast no part with me,  
False Visikitcha! subtlest of man's foes.'

And third came she who gives dark creeds their  
power,

Sîlabbat-paramâsa, sorceress,

Draped fair in many lands as lowly Faith,

But ever juggling souls with rites and prayers;

The keeper of those keys which lock up Hells

And open Heavens. 'Wilt thou dare,' she said,

'Put by our sacred books, dethrone our gods,

Unpeople all the temples, shaking down

That law which feeds the priests and props the  
realms?'

But Buddha answered, 'What thou bidd'st me keep

Is form which passes, but the free Truth stands;

Get thee unto thy darkness.' Next there drew

Gallantly nigh a braver Tempter, he,

Kama, the King of passions, who hath sway

Over the gods themselves, Lord of all loves,

Ruler of Pleasure's realm. Laughing he came

Unto the Tree, bearing his bow of gold

Wreathed with red blooms, and arrows of desire

Pointed with five-tongued delicate flame, which stings

The heart it smites sharper than poisoned barb:

And round him came into that lonely place

Bands of bright shapes with heavenly eyes and lips

Singing in lovely words the praise of Love

To music of invisible sweet chords,

BOOK THE SIXTH

So witching, that it seemed the night stood still  
To hear them, and the listening stars and moon  
Paused in their orbits while these hymned to Buddh  
Of lost delights, and how a mortal man  
Findeth nought dearer in the Three wide worlds  
Than are the yielded loving fragrant breasts  
Of Beauty and the rosy breast-blossoms,  
Love's rubies; nay, and toucheth nought more high  
Than is that dulcet harmony of form  
Seen in the lines and charms of loveliness,  
Unspeakable, yet speaking, soul to soul,  
Owned by the bounding blood, worshipped by will  
Which leaps to seize it, knowing this is best,  
This the true heaven where mortals are like gods,  
Makers and Masters, this the gift of gifts  
Ever renewed and worth a thousand woes.  
For who hath grieved when soft arms shut him safe,  
And all life melted to a happy sigh,  
And all the world was given in one warm kiss?  
So sang they with soft float of beckoning hands,  
Eyes lighted with love-flames, alluring smiles;  
In wanton dance their supple sides and limbs  
Revealing and concealing like burst buds  
Which tell their colour, but hide yet their hearts.  
Never so matchless grace delighted eye  
As troop by troop these midnight dancers swept  
Nearer the Tree, each daintier than the last,  
Murmuring, 'O great Siddârtha! I am thine,  
Taste of my mouth and see if youth is sweet!'  
Also, when nothing moved our Master's mind,  
Lo! Kama waved his magic bow, and lo!  
The band of dancers opened, and a shape,

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Fairest and stateliest of the throng, came forth  
Wearing the guise of sweet Yasôdhara.  
Tender the passion of those dark eyes seemed  
Brimming with tears; yearning those outspread arms  
Opened towards him; musical that moan  
Wherewith the beauteous shadow named his name,  
Sighing, 'My Prince! I die for lack of thee!  
What heaven hast thou found like that we knew  
By bright Rohini in the Pleasure-house,  
Where all these weary years I weep for thee?  
Return, Siddârtha! ah! return. But touch  
My lips again, but let me to thy breast  
Once, and these fruitless dreams will end! Oh, look!  
Am I not she thou lovedst?' But Buddh said,  
'For that sweet sake of her thou playest thus,  
Fair and false Shadow! is thy playing vain;  
I curse thee not who wear'st a form so dear,  
Yet as thou art so are all earthly shows.  
Melt to thy void again!' Thereat, a cry  
Thrilled through the grove, and all that comely rout  
Faded with flickering wafts of flame, and trail  
Of vaporous robes.

Next, under darkening skies  
And noise of rising storm, came fiercer Sins,  
The rearmost of the Ten: Patigha—Hate—  
With serpents coiled about her waist, which suck  
Poisonous milk from both her hanging dugs,  
And with her curses mix their angry hiss.  
Little wrought she upon that Holy One  
Who with his calm eyes dumb'd her bitter lips  
And made her black snakes writhe to hide their fangs.  
Then followed Rugaraga—Lust of days—

## BOOK THE SIXTH

That sensual Sin which out of greed for life  
Forgets to live; and next him Lust of Fame,  
Nobler Aruparaga, she whose spell  
Beguiles the wise, mother of daring deeds,  
Battles and toils. And haughty Mano came,  
The Fiend of Pride; and smooth Self-Righteousness,  
Uddhachcha; and—with many a hideous band  
Of vile and formless things, which crept and flapped  
Toad-like and bat-like—Ignorance, the Dam  
Of Fear and Wrong, Avidya, hideous hag,  
Whose footsteps left the midnight darker, while  
The rooted mountains shook, the wild winds howled,  
The broken clouds shed from their caverns streams  
Of levin-lighted rain; stars shot from heaven,  
The solid earth shuddered as if one laid  
Flame to her gaping wounds; the torn black air  
Was full of whistling wings, of screams and yells,  
Of evil faces peering, of vast fronts  
Terrible and majestic, Lords of Hell  
Who from a thousand Limbos led their troops  
To tempt the Master.

But Buddh heeded not,  
Sitting serene, with perfect virtue walled  
As is a stronghold by its gates and ramps;  
Also the Sacred Tree—the Bôdhi-tree—  
Amid that tumult stirred not, but each leaf  
Glistened as still as when on moonlit eves  
No zephyr spills the gathering gems of dew;  
For all this clamour raged outside the shade  
Spread by those cloistered stems:

In the third watch,—  
The earth being still, the hellish legions fled,

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

A soft air breathing from the sinking moon—  
Our Lord attained *Sammá-sambuddh*; he saw,  
By light which shines beyond our mortal ken,  
The line of all his lives in all the worlds;  
Far back, and farther back, and farthest yet,  
Five hundred lives and fifty. Even as one,  
At rest upon a mountain-summit, marks  
His path wind up by precipice and crag,  
Past thick-set woods shrunk to a patch; through bogs  
Glittering false-green; down hollows where he toiled  
Breathless; on dizzy ridges where his feet  
Had well-nigh slipped; beyond the sunny lawns,  
The cataract, and the cavern, and the pool,  
Backward to those dim flats wherefrom he sprang  
To reach the blue; thus Buddha did behold  
Life's upward steps long-linked, from levels low  
Where breath is base, to higher slopes and higher  
Whereon the ten great Virtues wait to lead  
The climber skyward. Also, Buddha saw  
How new life reaps what the old life did sow;  
How where its march breaks off its march begins;  
Holding the gain and answering for the loss;  
And how in each life good begets more good,  
Evil fresh evil; Death but casting up  
Debit or credit, whereupon th' account  
In merits or demerits stamps itself  
By sure arithmic—where no tittle drops—  
Certain and just, on some new-springing life;  
Wherein are packed and scored past thoughts and  
deeds,  
Strivings and triumphs, memories and marks  
Of lives foregone:

## BOOK THE SIXTH

And in the middle watch  
Our Lord attained *Abhidjna*—insight vast  
Ranging beyond this sphere to spheres unnamed,  
System on system, countless worlds and suns  
Moving in splendid measures, band by band  
Linked in division, one, yet separate,  
The silver islands of a sapphire sea,  
Shoreless, unfathomed, undiminished, stirred  
With waves which roll in restless tides of change.  
He saw those Lords of Light who hold their worlds  
By bonds invisible, how they themselves  
Circle obedient round mightier orbs  
Which serve profounder splendours, star to star  
Flashing the ceaseless radiance of life  
From centres ever shifting unto cirques  
Knowing no uttermost. These he beheld  
With unsealed vision, and of all those worlds,  
Cycle on epicycle, all their tale  
Of Kalpas, Mahakalpas—terms of time  
Which no man grasps, yea, though he knew to count  
The drops in Gunga from her springs to the sea,  
Measureless unto speech—whereby these wax  
And wane; whereby each of this heavenly host  
Fulfil its shining life, and darkling dies.  
Sakwal by Sakwal, depths and heights he passed  
Transported through the blue infinitudes,  
Marking—behind all modes, above all spheres,  
Beyond the burning impulse of each orb—  
That fixed decree at silent work which wills  
Evolve the dark to light, the dead to life,  
To fulness void, to form the yet unformed,  
Good unto better, better unto best,

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

By wordless edict; having none to bid,  
None to forbid; for this is past all gods,  
Immutable, unspeakable, supreme;  
A Power which builds, unbuilds, and builds again,  
Ruling all things accordant to the rule  
Of virtue, which is beauty, truth, and use:  
So that all things do well which serve the Power,  
And ill which hinder; nay, the worm does well  
Obedient to its kind; the hawk does well  
Which carries bleeding quarries to its young;  
The dewdrop and the star shine sisterly  
Globing together in the common work;  
And man who lives to die, dies to live well  
So if he guide his ways by blamelessness  
And earnest will to hinder not, but help  
All things both great and small which suffer life.  
These did our Lord see in the middle watch.

But, when the fourth watch came, the secret came  
Of Sorrow, which with evil mars the law,  
As damp and dross hold back the goldsmith's fire.  
Then was the Dukha-Satya opened him  
First of the 'Noble Truths'; how Sorrow is  
Shadow to life, moving where life doth move;  
Not to be laid aside until one lays  
Living aside, with all its changing states,  
Birth, growth, decay, love, hatred, pleasure, pain,  
Being and doing. How that none strips off  
These sad delights and pleasant griefs who lacks  
Knowledge to know them snares; but he who knows  
Avidya—Delusion—sets those snares,  
Loves life no longer, but ensues escape.

## BOOK THE SIXTH

The eyes of such a one are wide, he sees  
Delusion breeds Sankhâra, Tendency  
Perverse; Tendency Energy—Vidnnân—  
Whereby comes Namarûpa, local Form  
And Name and Bodiment, bringing the man  
With senses naked to the sensible,  
A helpless mirror of all shows which pass  
Across his heart; and so Vedanâ grows—  
'Sense-life'—false in its gladness, fell in sadness,  
But sad or glad, the Mother of Desire,  
Trishna, that thirst which makes the living drink  
Deeper and deeper of the false salt waves  
Whereon they float, pleasures, ambitions, wealth,  
Praise, fame, or domination, conquest, love;  
Rich meats and robes, and fair abodes and pride  
Of ancient lines, and lust of days, and strife  
To live, and sins that flow from strife, some sweet,  
Some bitter. Thus Life's thirst quenches itself  
With draughts which double thirst, but who is wise  
Tears from his soul this Trishna, feeds his sense  
No longer on false shows, files his firm mind  
To seek not, strive not, wrong not; bearing meek  
All ills which flow from foregone wrongfulness,  
And so constraining passions that they die  
Famished; till all the sum of ended life—  
The *Karma*—all that total of a soul  
Which is the things it did, the thoughts it had,  
The 'Self' it wove—with woof of viewless time,  
Crossed on the warp invisible of acts—  
The outcome of him on the Universe,  
Grows pure and sinless; either never more  
Needing to find a body and a place,



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

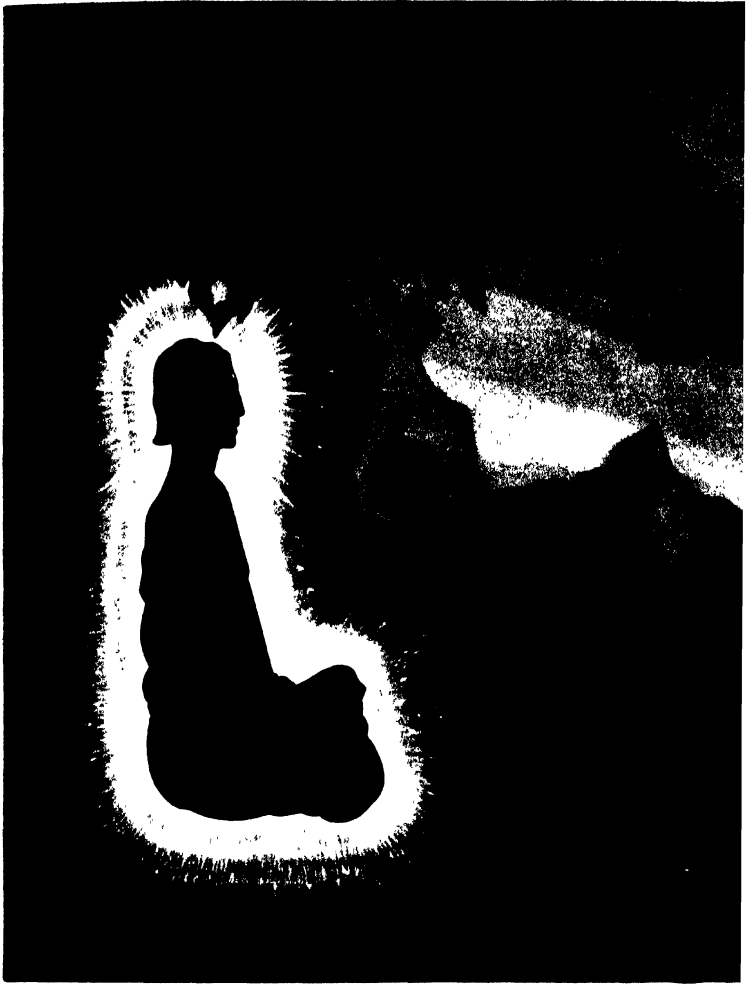
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Or so informing what fresh frame it takes  
In new existence that the new toils prove  
Lighter and lighter not to be at all,  
Thus 'finishing the Path'; free from Earth's cheats;  
Released from all the Skandhas of the flesh;  
Broken from ties—from Upâdânas—saved  
From whirling on the Wheel; aroused and sane  
As is a man wakened from hateful dreams.  
Until—greater than kings, than gods more glad!—  
The aching craze to live ends, and life glides—  
Lifeless—to nameless quiet, nameless joy,  
Blessed NIRVÂNA—sinless, stirless rest—  
That change which never changes!

Lo! the Dawn  
Sprang with Buddh's victory! lo! in the East  
Flamed the first fires of beauteous day, poured forth  
Through fleeting folds of Night's black drapery.  
High in the widening blue the herald-star  
Faded to paler silver as there shot  
Brighter and brightest bars of rosy gleam  
Across the grey. Far off the shadowy hills  
Saw the great Sun, before the world was 'ware,  
And donned their crowns of crimson; flower by  
flower  
Felt the warm breath of Morn and 'gan unfold  
Their tender lids. Over the spangled grass  
Swept the swift footsteps of the lovely Light,  
Turning the tears of Night to joyous gems,  
Decking the earth with radiance, 'broidering  
The sinking storm-clouds with a golden fringe,  
Gilding the feathers of the palms, which waved  
Glad salutation; darting beams of gold

*Far off the shadowy hills saw the great Sun*







## BOOK THE SIXTH

Into the glades; touching with magic wand  
The stream to rippled ruby; in the brake  
Finding the mild eyes of the antelopes  
And saying 'It is day!' in nested sleep  
Touching the small heads under many a wing  
And whispering, 'Children, praise the light of day!'  
Whereat there piped anthems of all the birds,  
The Koil's fluted song, the Bulbul's hymn,  
The 'morning, morning' of the painted thrush,  
The twitter of the sunbirds starting forth  
To find the honey ere the bees be out,  
The grey crow's caw, the parrot's scream, the strokes  
Of the green hammersmith, the myna's chirp,  
The never-finished love-talk of the doves:  
Yea! and so holy was the influence  
Of that high Dawn which came with victory  
That, far and near, in homes of men there spread  
An unknown peace. The slayer hid his knife;  
The robber laid his plunder back; the shroff  
Counted full tale of coins; all evil hearts  
Grew gentle, kind hearts gentler, as the balm  
Of that divinest Daybreak lightened Earth.  
Kings at fierce war called truce; the sick men leaped  
Laughing from beds of pain; the dying smiled  
As though they knew that happy Morn was sprung  
From fountains farther than the utmost East;  
And o'er the heart of sad Yasôdhara,  
Sitting forlorn at Prince Siddârtha's bed,  
Came sudden bliss, as if love should not fail  
Nor such vast sorrow miss to end in joy.  
So glad the World was—though it wist not why—  
That over desolate wastes went swooning songs

Of mirth, the voice of bodiless Prets and Bhuts  
Foreseeing Buddh; and Devas in the air  
Cried 'It is finished, finished!' and the priests  
Stood with the wondering people in the streets  
Watching those golden splendours flood the sky,  
And saying 'There hath happed some mighty thing.'  
Also in Ran and Jungle grew that day  
Friendship amongst the creatures; spotted deer  
Browsed fearless where the tigress fed her cubs,  
And cheetahs lapped the pool beside the bucks;  
Under the eagle's rock the brown hares scoured  
While his fierce beak but preened an idle wing;  
The snake sunned all his jewels in the beam  
With deadly fangs in sheath; the shrike let pass  
The nestling-finch; the emerald halcyons  
Sate dreaming while the fishes played beneath,  
Nor hawked the merops, though the butterflies—  
Crimson and blue and amber—flitted thick  
Around his perch; the Spirit of our Lord  
Lay potent upon man and bird and beast,  
Even while he mused under that Bôdhi-tree,  
Glorified with the Conquest gained for all,  
And lightened by a Light greater than Day's.

Then he arose—radiant, rejoicing, strong—  
Beneath the Tree, and lifting high his voice  
Spake this, in hearing of all Times and Worlds:

*Anékajátisangsârang  
Sandhâwissang anibhisang  
Gahakârangawesanto  
Dukkhâjâtipunappunang.*

BOOK THE SIXTH

*Gahakarakadithósi;*  
*Punagehang nakáhasi;*  
*Sabhátephásukhábhaggá,*  
*Gahakútangwisang khítang;*  
*Wisangkháragatang chítang;*  
*Janhánangkhayamajhagá.*

MANY A HOUSE OF LIFE

HATH HELD ME—SEEKING EVER HIM WHO WROUGHT  
THESE PRISONS OF THE SENSES, SORROW-FRAUGHT;  
SORE WAS MY CEASELESS STRIFE!

BUT NOW,

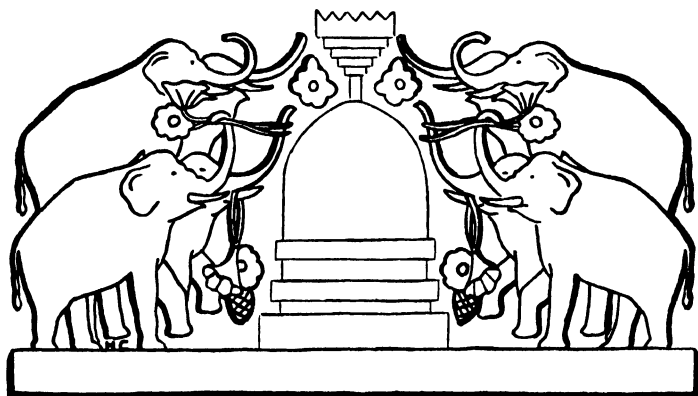
THOU BUILDER OF THIS TABERNACLE—THOU!  
I KNOW THEE! NEVER SHALT THOU BUILD AGAIN  
THESE WALLS OF PAIN,  
NOR RAISE THE ROOF-TREE OF DECEITS, NOR LAY  
FRESH RAFTERS ON THE CLAY;  
BROKEN THY HOUSE IS, AND THE RIDGE-POLE SPLIT!  
DELUSION FASHIONED IT!  
SAFE PASS I THENCE—DELIVERANCE TO OBTAIN.





*BOOK THE SEVENTH*





## BOOK THE SEVENTH

SORROWFUL dwelt the King Suddhōdana  
All those long years among the Sākya Lords  
Lacking the speech and presence of his Son;  
Sorrowful sate the sweet Yasōdhara  
All those long years, knowing no joy of life,  
Widowed of him her living Liege and Prince.  
And ever, on the news of some recluse  
Seen far away by pasturing camel-men  
Or traders threading devious paths for gain,  
Messengers from the King had gone and come,  
Bringing account of many a holy sage  
Lonely and lost to home; but nought of him  
The crown of white Kapilavastu's line,  
The glory of her monarch and his hope,  
The heart's content of sweet Yasōdhara,  
Far-wandered now, forgetful, changed, or dead.

But on a day in the Wasanta-time,  
When silver sprays swing on the mango-trees  
And all the earth is clad with garb of spring,  
The Princess sate by that bright garden-stream  
Whose gliding glass, bordered with lotus-cups,  
Mirrored so often in the bliss gone by  
Their clinging hands and meeting lips. Her lids  
Were wan with tears, her tender cheeks had thinned,  
Her lips' delicious curves were drawn with grief;  
The lustrous glory of her hair was hid—  
Close-bound as widows use; no ornament  
She wore, nor any jewel clasped the cloth—  
Coarse, and of mourning-white—crossed on her  
breast.

Slow moved and painfully those small fine feet  
Which had the roe's gait and the rose-leaf's fall  
In old years at the loving voice of him.  
Her eyes, those lamps of love,—which were as if  
Sunlight should shine from out the deepest dark,  
Illumining Night's peace with Daytime's glow—  
Unlighted now, and roving aimlessly,  
Scarce marked the clustering signs of coming Spring,  
So the silk lashes drooped over their orbs.  
In one hand was a girdle thick with pearls,  
Siddârtha's—treasured since that night he fled—  
(Ah, bitter Night! mother of weeping days!  
When was fond Love so pitiless to love,  
Save that this scorned to limit love by life?)  
The other led her little son, a boy  
Divinely fair, the pledge Siddârtha left—  
Named Rahula—now seven years old, who tripped

BOOK THE SEVENTH

---

Gladsome beside his mother, light of heart  
To see the spring-blooms burgeon o'er the world.

So, while they lingered by the lotus-pools,  
And, lightly laughing, Rahula flung rice  
To feed the blue and purple fish; and she  
With sad eyes watched the swiftly-flying cranes,  
Sighing, 'Oh! creatures of the wandering wing,  
If ye shall light where my dear Lord is hid,  
Say that Yasôdhara lives nigh to death  
For one word of his mouth, one touch of him!—  
Thus, as they played and sighed—mother and child—  
Came some among the damsels of the Court  
Saying, 'Great Princess! there have entered in  
At the south gate merchants of Hastinpûr,  
Tripusha called and Bhalluk, men of worth,  
Long travelled from the loud sea's edge, who bring  
Marvellous lovely webs pictured with gold,  
Waved blades of gilded steel, wrought bowls in brass,  
Cut ivories, spice, simples, and unknown birds,  
Treasures of far-off peoples; but they bring  
That which doth beggar these, for He is seen!  
Thy Lord,—our Lord,—the hope of all the land—  
Siddârtha! they have seen him face to face,  
Yea, and have worshipped him with knees and brows,  
And offered offerings; for he is become  
All which was shown, a Teacher of the wise,  
World-honoured, holy, wonderful; a Buddh  
Who doth deliver men and save all flesh  
By sweetest speech and pity vast as Heaven:  
And, lo! he journeyeth hither, these do say.'

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Then—while the glad blood bounded in her veins  
As Gunga leaps when first the mountain snows  
Melt at her springs—uprose Yasôdhara  
And clapped her palms, and laughed, with brim-  
ming tears  
Beading her lashes. ‘Oh! call quick,’ she cried,  
‘These merchants to my purdah, for mine ears  
Thirst like parched throats to drink their blessed  
news.

Go bring them in,—but, if their tale be true,  
Say I will fill their girdles with much gold,  
With gems that kings shall envy; come ye too,  
My girls, for ye shall have guerdon of this  
If there be gifts to speak my grateful heart.’

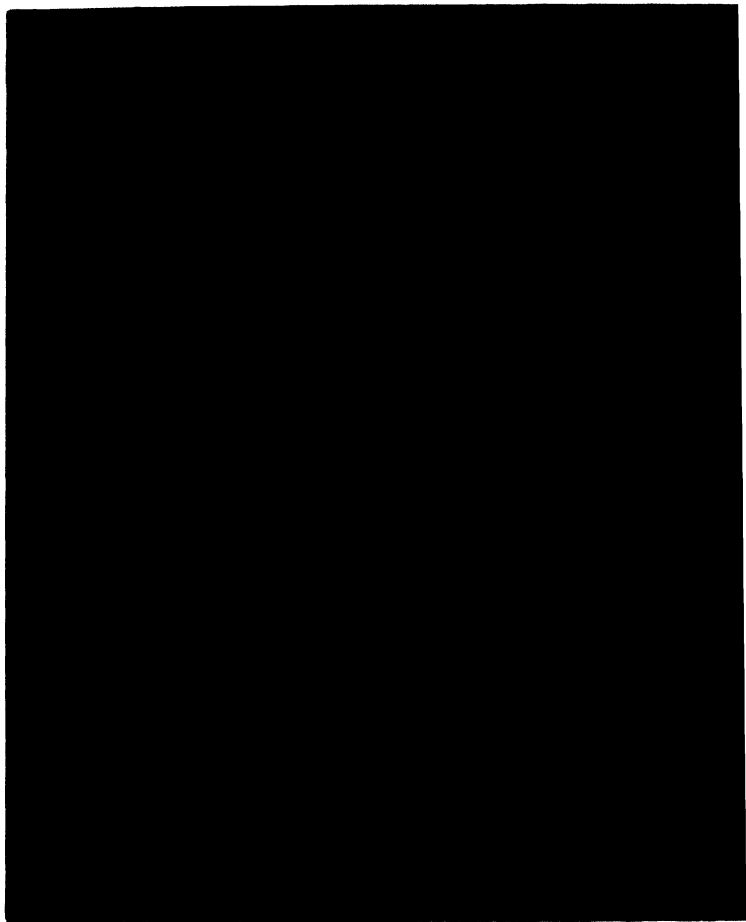
So went those merchants to the Pleasure-house,  
Full softly pacing through its golden ways  
With naked feet, amid the peering maids,  
Much wondering at the glories of the Court.  
Whom, when they came without the purdah’s folds,  
A voice, tender and eager, filled and charmed  
With trembling music, saying, ‘Ye are come  
From far, fair Sirs! and ye have seen my Lord—  
Yea, worshipped—for he is become a Buddh,  
World-honoured, holy, and delivers men,  
And journeyeth hither. Speak! for, if this be,  
Friends are ye of my House, welcome and dear.’

Then answer made Tripusha, ‘We have seen  
That sacred Master, Princess! we have bowed  
Before his feet; for who was lost a Prince  
Is found a greater than the King of kings.

*When they came without the purdah's folds*









BOOK THE SEVENTH

---

Under the Bôdhi-tree by Phalgû's bank  
That which shall save the world hath late been  
wrought  
By him,—the Friend of all, the Prince of all—  
Thine most, High Lady! from whose tears men win  
The comfort of this Word the Master speaks.  
Lo! he is well, as one beyond all ills,  
Uplifted as a god from earthly woes,  
Shining with risen Truth, golden and clear.  
Moreover as he entereth town by town,  
Preaching those noble ways which lead to peace,  
The hearts of men follow his path as leaves  
Troop to the wind or sheep draw after one  
Who knows the pastures. We ourselves have heard,  
By Gaya in the green Tchîrnika grove,  
Those wondrous lips and done them reverence:  
He cometh hither ere the first rains fall.'

Thus spake he, and Yasôdhara, for joy,  
Scarce mastered breath to answer, 'Be it well  
Now and at all times with ye, worthy friends!  
Who bring good tidings; but of this great thing  
Wist ye how it befell?'

Then Bhalluk told  
Such as the people of the valleys knew  
Of that dread night of conflict, when the air  
Darkened with fiendish shadows, and the earth  
Quaked, and the waters swelled with Mara's wrath.  
Also how gloriously that morning broke  
Radiant with rising hopes for man, and how  
The Lord was found rejoicing 'neath his Tree.  
But many days the burden of release—

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

To be escaped beyond all storms of doubt,  
Safe on Truth's shore—lay, spake he, on that heart  
A golden load; for how shall men—Buddh mused—  
Who love their sins and cleave to cheats of sense,  
And drink of error from a thousand springs,  
Having no mind to see, nor strength to break  
The fleshly snare which binds them—how should  
such

Receive the Twelve Nidânas and the Law  
Redeeming all, yet strange to profit by,  
As the caged bird oft shuns its opened door?  
So had we missed the helpful victory  
If, in this earth without a refuge, Buddh,  
Winning the way, had deemed it all too hard  
For mortal feet and passed, none following him.  
Yet pondered the compassion of our Lord;  
But in that hour there rang a voice as sharp  
As cry of travail, so as if the earth  
Moaned in birth-throe, '*Naśyami aham bhū  
Naśyati loka!*' SURELY I AM LOST,  
I AND MY CREATURES: then a pause, and next  
A pleading sigh borne on the western wind,  
'*Sruyatâm dharma, Bhagwat!*' OH, SUPREME!  
LET THY GREAT LAW BE UTTERED! Whereupon  
The Master cast his vision forth on flesh,  
Saw who should hear and who must wait to hear,  
As the keen Sun gilding the lotus-lakes  
Seeth which buds will open to his beams  
And which are not yet risen from their roots;  
Then spake, divinely smiling, 'Yea! I preach!  
Whoso will listen let him learn the Law.'

BOOK THE SEVENTH

---

Afterwards passed he, said they, by the hills  
Unto Benares, where he taught the Five,  
Showing how birth and death should be destroyed,  
And how man hath no fate except past deeds,  
No Hell but what he makes, no Heaven too high  
For those to reach whose passions sleep subdued.  
This was the fifteenth day of Vaishya,  
Mid-afternoon, and that night was full moon.

But, of the Rishis, first Kaundinya  
Owned the Four Truths and entered on the Paths;  
And after him Bhadraka, Asvajit,  
Basava, Mahanâma; also there  
Within the Deer-park, at the feet of Buddh,  
Yasad the Prince with nobles fifty-four,  
Hearing the blessed word our Master spake,  
Worshipped and followed; for there sprang up peace  
And knowledge of a new time come for men  
In all who heard, as spring the flowers and grass  
When water sparkles through a sandy plain.

These sixty—said they—did our Lord send forth,  
Made perfect in restraint and passion-free,  
To teach the Way; but the World-honoured turned  
South from the Deer-park and Isipatan  
To Yashti and King Bimbisâra's realm,  
Where many days he taught; and after these  
King Bimbisâra and his folk believed,  
Learning the law of love and ordered life.  
Also he gave the Master, of free gift,—  
Pouring forth water on the hands of Buddh,—  
The Bamboo-Garden, named Wéluvana,

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Wherein are streams and caves and lovely glades;  
And the King set a stone there, carved with this:—

*Yé dharma hetuppabhawá*  
*Yesan hétun Tathágató;*  
*Aha yesan cha yo nírodhó*  
*Ewan wadi Maha Samano.*

‘What life’s course and cause sustain  
These Tathâgato made plain;  
What delivers from life’s woe  
That our Lord hath made us know.’

And, in that Garden—said they—there was held  
A high Assembly, where the Teacher spake  
Wisdom and power, winning all souls which heard;  
So that nine hundred took the yellow robe—  
Such as the Master wears,—and spread his Law;  
And this the gâthâ was wherewith he closed:—

*Sabba pápassa akaranan;*  
*Kusalassa upasampadá:*  
*Sa chitta pariyodapanan;*  
*Etan Budhânusâsanan.*

‘Evil swells the debts to pay,  
Good delivers and acquits;  
Shun evil, follow good; hold sway  
Over thyself. This is the Way.’

Whom, when they ended, speaking so of him,  
With gifts, and thanks which made the jewels dull,

BOOK THE SEVENTH

---

The Princess recompensed. 'But by what road  
Wendeth my Lord?' she asked: the merchants said,  
'Yôjans threescore stretch from the city-walls  
To Rajagriha, whence the easy path  
Passeth by Sona hither, and the hills.  
Our oxen, treading eight slow koss a day,  
Came in one moon.'

Then the King, hearing word,  
Sent nobles of the Court—well-mounted lords—  
Nine separate messengers, each embassy  
Bidden to say, 'The King Suddhôdana—  
Nearer the pyre by seven long years of lack,  
Wherethrough he hath not ceased to seek for thee—  
Prays of his son to come unto his own,  
The Throne and people of this longing Realm,  
Lest he shall die and see thy face no more.'  
Also nine horsemen sent Yasôdhara  
Bidden to say, 'The Princess of thy House—  
Rahula's mother—craves to see thy face  
As the night-blowing moon-flower's swelling heart  
Pines for the moon, as pale asôka-buds  
Wait for a woman's foot: if thou hast found  
More than was lost, she prays her part in this,  
Rahula's part, but most of all thyself.'  
So sped the Sâkyas lords, but it befell  
That each one, with the message in his mouth,  
Entered the Bamboo-Garden in that hour  
When Buddha taught his Law; and—hearing—each  
Forgot to speak, lost thought of King and quest,  
Of the sad Princess even; only gazed  
Eye-rapt upon the Master; only hung  
Heart-caught upon the speech, compassionate,



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Commanding, perfect, pure, enlightening all,  
Poured from those sacred lips. Look! like a bee  
Winged for the hive, who sees the mōgras spread  
And scents their utter sweetness on the air,  
If he be honey-filled, it matters not;  
If night be nigh, or rain, he will not heed;  
Needs must he light on those delicious blooms  
And drain their nectar; so these messengers  
One with another, hearing Buddha's words,  
Let go the purpose of their speed, and mixed,  
Heedless of all, amid the Master's train.  
Wherefore the King bade that Udayi go—  
Chiefest in all the Court, and faithfullest,  
Siddârtha's playmate in the happier days—  
Who, as he drew anear the garden, plucked  
Blown tufts of tree-wool from the grove and sealed  
The entrance of his hearing; thus he came  
Safe through the lofty peril of the place,  
And told the message of the King, and hers.

Then meekly bowed his head and spake our Lord  
Before the people, 'Surely I shall go!  
It is my duty as it was my will;  
Let no man miss to render reverence  
To those who lend him life, whereby come means  
To live and die no more, but safe attain  
Blissful Nirvâna, if ye keep the Law,  
Purging past wrongs and adding nought thereto,  
Complete in love and lovely charities.  
Let the King know and let the Princess hear  
I take the way forewith.' This told, the folk  
Of white Kapilavastu and its fields

BOOK THE SEVENTH

---

Made ready for the entrance of their Prince.  
At the south gate a bright pavilion rose  
With flower-wreathed pillars, and the walls of silk  
Wrought on their red and green with woven gold.  
Also the roads were laid with scented boughs  
Of neem and mango, and full mussuks shed  
Sandal and jasmine on the dust; and flags  
Fluttered; and on the day when he should come  
It was ordained how many elephants—  
With silver howdahs and their tusks gold-tipped—  
Should wait beyond the ford, and where the drums  
Should boom 'Siddârtha cometh!' where the lords  
Should light and worship, and the dancing girls  
Where they should strew their flowers, with dance  
and song,  
So that the steed he rode might tramp knee-deep  
In rose and balsam, and the ways be fair;  
While the town rang with music and high joy.  
This was ordained, and all men's ears were pricked  
Dawn after dawn to catch the first drum's beat  
Announcing, 'Now he cometh!'

But it fell—

Eager to be before—Yasôdhara  
Rode in her litter to the city-walls  
Where soared the bright pavilion. All around  
A beauteous garden smiled—Nigrôdha named—  
Shaded with bel-trees and the green-plumed dates,  
New-trimmed and gay with winding walks and banks  
Of fruits and flowers; for the southern road  
Skirted its lawns, on this hand leaf and bloom,  
On that the suburb-huts where base-borns dwelt  
Outside the gates, a patient folk and poor,

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Whose touch for Kshatriya and priest of Brahm  
Were sore defilement. Yet those, too, were quick  
With expectation, rising ere the dawn  
To peer along the road, to climb the trees  
At far-off trumpet of some elephant,  
Or stir of temple-drum; and when none came,  
Busied with lowly chares to please the Prince;  
Sweeping their door-stones, setting forth their flags,  
Stringing the fluted fig-leaves into chains,  
New furbishing the Lingam, decking new  
Yesterday's faded arch of boughs, but aye  
Questioning wayfarers if any noise  
Be on the road of great Siddârtha. These  
The Princess marked with lovely languid eyes,  
Watching, as they, the southward plain, and bent  
Like them to listen if the passers gave  
News of the path. So fell it she beheld  
One slow approaching with his head close shorn,  
A yellow cloth over his shoulder cast,  
Girt as the hermits are, and in his hand  
An earthen bowl, shaped melonwise, the which  
Meekly at each hut door he held a space,  
Taking the granted dole with gentle thanks  
And all as gently passing where none gave.  
Two followed him wearing the yellow robe,  
But he who bore the bowl so lordly seemed,  
So reverend, and with such a passage moved,  
With so commanding presence filled the air,  
With such sweet eyes of holiness smote all,  
That, as they reached him alms the givers gazed  
Awestruck upon his face, and some bent down  
In worship, and some ran to fetch fresh gifts,

*Siddârtha! Lord!*







BOOK THE SEVENTH

---

Grieved to be poor; till slowly, group by group,  
Children and men and women drew behind  
Into his steps, whispering with covered lips,  
'Who is he? who? when looked a Rishi thus?'  
But as he came with quiet footfall on  
Nigh the pavilion, lo! the silken door  
Lifted, and, all unveiled, Yasôdhara  
Stood in his path crying, 'Siddârtha! Lord!'  
With wide eyes streaming and with close-clasped  
hands,  
Then sobbing fell upon his feet, and lay.

Afterwards, when this weeping lady passed  
Into the Noble Paths, and one had prayed  
Answer from Buddha wherefore—being vowed  
Quit of all mortal passion and the touch,  
Flower-soft and conquering, of a woman's hands—  
He suffered such embrace, the Master said:  
'The greater beareth with the lesser love  
So it may raise it unto easier heights.  
Take heed that no man, being 'scaped from bonds,  
Vexeth bound souls with boasts of liberty.  
Free are ye rather that your freedom spread  
By patient winning and sweet wisdom's skill.  
Three eras of long toil bring Bodhisâts—  
Who will be guides and help this darkling world—  
Unto deliverance, and the first is named  
Of deep "Resolve", the second of "Attempt",  
The third of "Nomination." Lo! I lived  
In era of Resolve, desiring good,  
Searching for wisdom, but mine eyes were sealed.  
Count the grey seeds on yonder castor-clump,



So many rains it is since I was Ram,  
A merchant of the coast which looketh south  
To Lanka and the hiding-place of pearls.  
Also in that far time Yasôdhara  
Dwelt with me in our village by the sea,  
Tender as now, and Lukshmi was her name.  
And I remember how I journeyed thence  
Seeking our gain, for poor the household was  
And lowly. Not the less with wistful tears  
She prayed me that I should not part, nor tempt  
Perils by land and water. "How could love  
Leave what it loved?" she wailed; yet, venturing, I  
Passed to the Straits, and after storm and toil  
And deadly strife with creatures of the deep,  
And woes beneath the midnight and the noon,  
Searching the wave I won therefrom a pearl  
Moonlike and glorious, such as kings might buy  
Emptying their treasury. Then came I glad  
Unto mine hills, but over all that land  
Famine spread sore; ill was I stead to live  
In journey home, and hardly reached my door—  
Aching for food—with that white wealth of the sea  
Tied in my girdle. Yet no food was there;  
And on the threshold she for whom I toiled—  
More than myself—lay with her speechless lips  
Nigh unto death for one small gift of grain.  
Then cried I, "If there be who hath of grain,  
Here is a kingdom's ransom for one life;  
Give Lukshmi bread and take my moonlight pearl."  
Whereat one brought the last of all his hoard,  
Millet—three seers—and clutched the beautiful  
thing.

## BOOK THE SEVENTH

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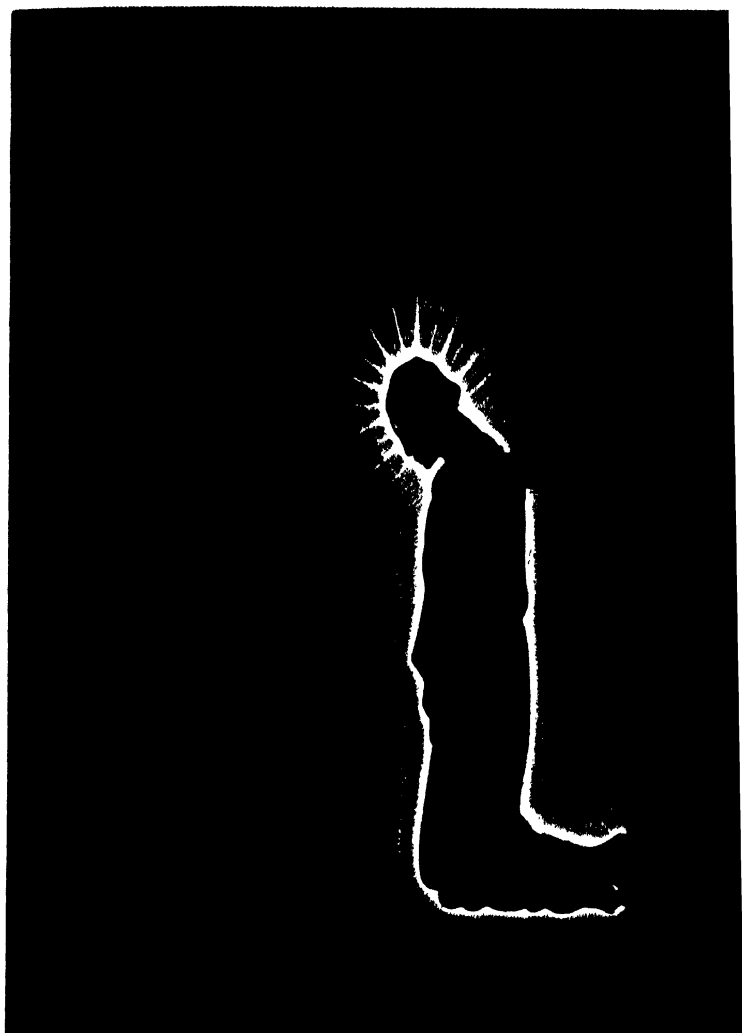
But Lukshmi lived, and sighed with gathered life,  
“Lo! thou didst love indeed!” I spent my pearl  
Well in that life to comfort heart and mind  
Else quite uncomforted; but these pure pearls,  
My last great gain, won from a deeper wave—  
The Twelve Nidânas and the Law of Good—  
Cannot be spent, nor dimmed, and most fulfil  
Their perfect beauty being freeliest given.  
For like as is to Meru yonder hill  
Heaped by the little ants, and like as dew  
Dropped in the footmark of a bounding roe  
Unto the shoreless seas, so was that gift  
Unto my present giving; and so love—  
Vaster in being free from toils of sense—  
Was wisest stooping to the weaker heart;  
And so the feet of sweet Yasôdhara  
Passed into peace and bliss, being softly led.’

But when the King heard how Siddârtha came  
Shorn, with the mendicant’s sad-coloured cloth,  
And stretching out a bowl to gather orts  
From base-borns’ leavings, wrathful sorrow drave  
Love from his heart. Thrice on the ground he spat,  
Plucked at his silvered beard, and strode straight  
forth  
Lackeyed by trembling lords. Frowning he clomb  
Upon his war-horse, drove the spurs, and dashed,  
Angered, through wondering streets and lanes of folk  
Scarce finding breath to say, ‘The King! bow down!’  
Ere the loud cavalcade had clattered by:  
Which—at the turning by the Temple-wall,  
Where the south gate was seen—encountered full

A mighty crowd; to every edge of it  
Poured fast more people, till the roads were lost,  
Blotted by that huge company which thronged  
And grew, close following him whose look serene  
Met the old King's. Nor lived the father's wrath  
Longer than while the gentle eyes of Buddh  
Lingered in worship on his troubled brows,  
Then downcast sank, with his true knee, to earth  
In proud humility. So dear it seemed  
To see the Prince, to know him whole, to mark  
That glory greater than of earthly state  
Crowning his head, that majesty which brought  
All men, so awed and silent, in his steps.  
Nathless, the King broke forth, 'Ends it in this  
That great Siddârtha steals into his realm,  
Wrapt in a clout, shorn, sandalled, craving food  
Of low-borns, he whose life was a God's?  
My son! heir of this spacious power, and heir  
Of Kings who did but clap their palms to have  
What earth could give or eager service bring?  
Thou should'st have come apparelled in thy rank,  
With shining spears, and tramp of horse and foot.  
Lo! all my soldiers camped upon the road,  
And all my city waited at the gates;  
Where hast thou sojourned through these evil years  
Whilst thy crowned father mourned? and she, too,  
there  
Lived as the widows use, foregoing joys;  
Never once hearing sound of song or string,  
Nor wearing once the festal robe, till now  
When in her cloth of gold she welcomes home  
A beggar-spouse in yellow remnants clad.

*That great Siddārtha steals into his realm*







Son! why is this?’

‘My Father!’ came reply,  
‘It is the custom of my race.’

‘Thy race,’

Answered the King, ‘counteth a hundred thrones  
From Maha Sammât, but no deed like this.’

‘Not of a mortal line,’ the Master said,  
‘I spake, but of descent invisible,  
The Buddhas who have been and who shall be  
Of these am I, and what they did I-do,  
And this, which now befalls, so fell before,  
That at his gate a King in warrior-mail  
Should meet his son, a Prince in hermit-weeds;  
And that, by love and self-control, being more  
Than mightiest Kings in all their puissance,  
The appointed helper of the Worlds should bow—  
As now do I—and with all lowly love  
Proffer, where it is owed for tender debts,  
The first-fruits of the treasure he hath brought;  
Which now I proffer.’

Then the King amazed,  
Inquired ‘What treasure?’ and the Teacher took  
Meekly the royal palm, and while they paced  
Through worshipping streets—the Princess and the  
King

On either side—he told the things which make  
For peace and pureness, those Four noble Truths  
Which hold all wisdom as shores shut the seas,  
Those eight right Rules whereby who will may walk—  
Monarch or slave—upon the perfect Path  
That hath its Stages Four and Precepts Eight,



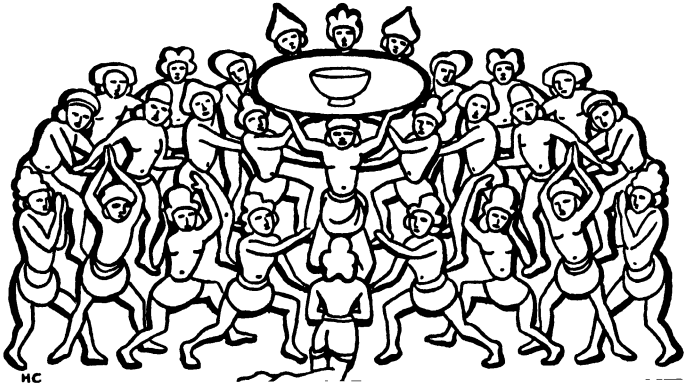
## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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Whereby whoso will live—mighty or mean,  
Wise or unlearned, man, woman, young or old—  
Shall, soon or late, break from the wheels of life,  
Attaining blest Nirvâna. So they came  
Into the Palace porch, Suddhâdana  
With brows unknit drinking the mighty words,  
And in his own hand carrying Buddha's bowl,  
Whilst a new light brightened the lovely eyes  
Of sweet Yasôdhara and sunned her tears;  
And that night entered they the Way of Peace.

*BOOK THE EIGHTH*





## BOOK THE EIGHTH

A BROAD mead spreads by swift Kohâna's bank  
At Nagara; five days shall bring a man  
In ox-wain thither from Benares' shrines  
Eastward and northward journeying. The horns  
Of white Himâla look upon the place,  
Which all the year is glad with blooms, and girt  
By groves made green from that bright streamlet's  
wave.

Soft are its slopes and cool its fragrant shades,  
And holy all the spirit of the spot  
Unto this time: the breath of eve comes hushed  
Over the tangled thickets, and high heaps  
Of carved red stones cloven by root and stem  
Of creeping fig, and clad with waving veil  
Of leaf and grass. The still snake glistens forth  
From crumbled work of lac and cedar-beams  
To coil his folds there on deep-graven slabs;  
The lizard dwells and darts o'er painted floors  
Where Kings have paced; the grey fox litters safe

Under the broken thrones; only the peaks,  
And stream, and sloping lawns, and gentle airs  
Abide unchanged. All else, like all fair shows  
Of life, are fled—for this is where it stood,  
The city of Suddhōdana, the hill  
Whereon, upon an eve of gold and blue,  
At sinking sun Lord Buddha set himself  
To teach the Law in hearing of his own.

Lo! ye shall read it in the Sacred Books  
How, being met in that glad pleasaunce-place—  
A garden in old days with hanging walks,  
Fountains, and tanks, and rose-banked terraces  
Girdled by gay pavilions and the sweep  
Of stately palace-fronts—the Master sate  
Eminent, worshipped, all the earnest throng  
Watching the opening of his lips to learn  
That wisdom which hath made our Asia mild;  
Whereto four thousand lakhs of living souls  
Witness this day. Upon the King's right hand  
He sate, and round were ranged the Sākya lords,  
Ananda, Devadatta—all the Court:  
Behind stood Seriyut and Mugallan, chiefs  
Of the calm brethren in the yellow garb,  
A goodly company. Between his knees  
Rahula smiled, with wondering childish eyes  
Bent on the awful face, while at his feet  
Sate sweet Yasōdhara, her heartaches gone,  
Foreseeing that fair love which doth not feed  
On fleeting sense, that life which knows no age,  
That blessed last of deaths when Death is dead,  
His victory and hers. Wherefore she laid

## BOOK THE EIGHTH

Her hand upon his hands, folding around  
Her silver shoulder-cloth his yellow-robe,  
Nearest in all the world to him whose words  
The Three Worlds waited for. I cannot tell  
A small part of the splendid lore which broke  
From Buddha's lips: I am a late-come scribe  
Who love the Master and his love of men,  
And tell this legend, knowing he was wise,  
But have not wit to speak beyond the books;  
And time hath blurred their script and ancient sense,  
Which once was new and mighty, moving all.  
A little of that large discourse I know  
Which Buddha spake on the soft Indian eve;  
So, too, I know it writ that they who heard  
Were more—lakhs more—crores more—than could  
be seen,  
For all the Devas and the Dead thronged there,  
Till Heaven was emptied to the seventh zone  
And uttermost dark Hells opened their bars;  
Also the daylight lingered past its time  
In rose-leaf radiance on the watching peaks,  
So that it seemed Night listened in the glens  
And Noon upon the mountains; yea! they write,  
The Evening stood between them like some maid  
Celestial, love-struck, rapt; the smooth-rolled clouds  
Her braided hair; the studded stars the pearls  
And diamonds of her coronal; the moon  
Her forehead-jewel, and the deepening dark  
Her woven garments. 'Twas her close-held breath  
Which came in scented sighs across the lawns  
While our Lord taught, and, while he taught, who  
heard—

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Though he were stranger in the land, or slave,  
High caste or low, come of the Aryan blood,  
Or Mlech or Jungle-dweller—seemed to hear  
What tongue his fellows talked. Nay, outside those  
Who crowded by the river, great and small,  
The birds and beasts and creeping things—'tis writ—  
Had sense of Buddha's vast embracing love  
And took the promise of his piteous speech;  
So that their lives—prisoned in shape of ape,  
Tiger, or deer, shagged bear, jackal, or wolf,  
Foul-feeding kite, pearled dove, or peacock gemmed,  
Squat toad, or speckled serpent, lizard, bat;  
Yea, or of fish fanning the river-waves—  
Touched meekly at the skirts of brotherhood  
With man who hath less innocence than these,  
And in mute gladness knew their bondage broke  
Whilst Buddha spake these things before the King:—

OM, AMITAYA! measure not with words  
Th' Immeasurable; nor sink the string of thought  
Into the Fathomless. Who asks doth err,  
Who answers, errs. Say nought!

The Books teach Darkness was, at first of all,  
And Brahm, sole meditating in that Night:  
Look not for Brahm and the Beginning there!  
Nor him, nor any light

Shall any gazer see with mortal eyes,  
Or any searcher know by mortal mind;  
Veil after veil will lift—but there must be  
Veil upon veil behind.

## BOOK THE EIGHTH

Stars sweep and question not. This is enough  
That life and death and joy and woe abide;  
And cause and sequence, and the course of time,  
And being's ceaseless tide,

Which, ever changing, runs, linked like a river  
By ripples following ripples, fast or slow—  
The same yet not the same—from far-off fountain  
To where its waters flow

Into the seas. These, steaming to the Sun,  
Give the lost wavelets back in cloudy fleece  
To trickle down the hills, and glide again;  
Having no pause or peace.

This is enough to know, the phantasms are;  
The Heavens, Earths, Worlds, and changes chang-  
ing them,  
A mighty whirling wheel of strife and stress  
Which none can stay or stem.

Pray not! the Darkness will not brighten! Ask  
Nought from the Silence, for it cannot speak!  
Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains!  
Ah! Brothers, Sisters! seek

Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,  
Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruits and  
cakes;  
Within yourselves deliverance must be sought;  
Each man his prison makes.



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Each hath such lordship as the loftiest ones;  
Nay, for with Powers above, around, below,  
As with all flesh and whatsoever lives,  
maketh joy and woe.

What hath been bringeth what shall be, and is,  
Worse—better—last for first and first for last:  
The Angels in the Heavens of Gladness reap  
Fruits of a holy past:

The devils in the underworlds wear out  
Deeds that were wicked in an age gone by:  
Nothing endures: fair virtues waste with time,  
Foul sins grow purged thereby.

Who toiled a slave may come anew a Prince  
For gentle worthiness and merit won;  
Who ruled a King may wander earth in rags  
For things done and undone.

Higher than Indra's ye may lift your lot,  
And sink it lower than the worm or gnat;  
The end of many myriad lives is this,  
The end of myriads that.

Only, while turns this wheel invisible,  
No pause, no peace, no staying-place can be;  
Who mounts may fall, who falls will mount; the  
spokes  
Go round unceasingly!

\* \* \* \* \*

*BOOK THE EIGHTH*

If ye lay bound upon the wheel of change,  
And no way were of breaking from the chain,  
The Heart of boundless Being is a curse,  
The Soul of Things fell Pain.

Ye are not bound! the Soul of Things is sweet,  
The Heart of Being is celestial rest;  
Stronger than woe is will: that which was Good  
Doth pass to Better—Best.

I, Buddh, who wept with all my brothers' tears,  
Whose heart was broken by a whole world's woe,  
Laugh and am glad, for there is Liberty!  
Ho! ye who suffer! know

Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compels,  
None other holds you that ye live and die,  
And whirl upon the wheel, and hug and kiss  
Its spokes of agony,

Its tire of tears, its nave of nothingness.  
Behold, I show you Truth! Lower than hell,  
Higher than Heaven, outside the utmost stars,  
Farther than Brahm doth dwell,

Before beginning, and without an end,  
As space eternal and as surety sure,  
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,  
Only its laws endure.

This is its touch upon the blossomed rose,  
The fashion of its hand shaped lotus-leaves;  
In dark soil and the silence of the seeds  
The robe of Spring it weaves;

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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That is its painting on the glorious clouds,  
And these its emeralds on the peacock's train;  
It hath its stations in the stars; its slaves  
In lightning, wind, and rain.

Out of the dark it wrought the heart of man,  
Out of dull shells the pheasant's pencilled neck:  
Ever at toil, it brings to loveliness  
All ancient wrath and wreck.

The grey eggs in the golden sun-bird's nest  
Its treasures are, the bees' six-sided cell  
Its honey-pot; the ant wots of its ways,  
The white doves know them well.

It spreadeth forth for flight the eagle's wings  
What time she beareth home her prey; it sends  
The she-wolf to her cubs; for unloved things  
It findeth food and friends.

It is not marred nor stayed in any use,  
All liketh it; the sweet white milk it brings  
To mothers' breasts; it brings the white drops, too,  
Wherewith the young snake stings.

The ordered music of the marching orbs  
It makes in viewless canopy of sky;  
In deep abyss of earth it hides up gold,  
Sards, sapphires, lazuli.

Ever and ever fetching secrets forth,  
It sitteth in the green of forest-glades  
Nursing strange seedlings at the cedar's root,  
Devising leaves, blooms, blades.

## BOOK THE EIGHTH

It slayeth and it saveth, nowise moved  
Except unto the working out of doom;  
Its threads are Love and Life; and Death and Pain  
The shuttles of its loom.

It maketh and unmaketh, mending all;  
What it hath wrought is better than had been;  
Slow grows the splendid pattern that it plans  
Its wistful hands between.

This is its work upon the things ye see:  
The unseen things are more; men's hearts and  
minds,  
The thoughts of peoples and their ways and wills,  
Those, too, the great Law binds.

Unseen it helpeth ye with faithful hands,  
Unheard it speaketh stronger than the storm.  
Pity and Love are man's because long stress  
Moulded blind mass to form.

It will not be contemned of anyone;  
Who thwarts it loses, and who serves it gains;  
The hidden good it pays with peace and bliss,  
The hidden ill with pains.

It seeth everywhere and marketh all:  
Do right—it recompenseth! do one wrong—  
The equal retribution must be made,  
Though DHARMA tarry long.

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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It knows not wrath nor pardon; utter-true  
Its measures mete, its faultless balance weighs;  
Times are as nought, to-morrow it will judge,  
Or after many days.

By this the slayer's knife did stab himself;  
The unjust judge hath lost his own defender;  
The false tongue dooms its lie; the creeping thief  
And spoiler rob, to render.

Such is the Law which moves to righteousness,  
Which none at last can turn aside or stay;  
The heart of it is Love, the end of it  
Is Peace and Consummation sweet. Obey!

The Books say well, my Brothers! each man's life  
The outcome of his former living is;  
The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes,  
The bygone right breeds bliss.

That which ye sow ye reap. See yonder fields!  
The sesamum was sesamum, the corn  
Was corn. The Silence and the Darkness knew!  
So is a man's fate born.

He cometh, reaper of the things he sowed,  
Sesamum, corn, so much cast in past birth;  
And so much weed and poison-stuff, which mar  
Him and the aching earth.

*BOOK THE EIGHTH*

If he shall labour rightly, rooting these,  
And planting wholesome seedlings where they  
grew,  
Fruitful and fair and clean the ground shall be,  
And rich the harvest<sup>v</sup> due.

If he who liveth, learning whence woe springs,  
Endureth patiently, striving to pay  
His utmost debt for ancient evils done  
In Love and Truth alway;

If making none to lack, he throughly purge  
The lie and lust of self forth from his blood;  
Suffering all meekly, rendering for offence  
Nothing but grace and good;

If he shall day by day dwell merciful,  
Holy and just and kind and true; and rend  
Desire from where it clings with bleeding roots,  
Till love of life have end:

He—dying—leaveth as the sum of him  
A life-count closed, whose ills are dead and quit,  
Whose good is quick and mighty, far and near,  
So that fruits follow it.

No need hath such to live as ye name life;  
That which began in him when he began  
Is finished: he hath wrought the purpose through  
Of what did make him Man.

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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Never shall yearnings torture him, nor sins  
Stain him, nor ache of earthly joys and woes  
Invade his safe eternal peace; nor deaths  
And lives recur. He goes

Unto NIRVĀNA. He is one with Life,  
Yet lives not. He is blest, ceasing to be.  
OM, MANI PADME, OM! the Dewdrop-slips  
Into the shining sea!

This is the doctrine of the KARMA. Learn!  
Only when all the dross of sin is quit,  
Only when life dies like a white flame spent  
Death dies along with it.

Say not 'I am', 'I was', or 'I shall be',  
Think not ye pass from house to house of flesh  
Like travellers who remember and forget,  
Ill-lodged or well-lodged. Fresh

Issues upon the Universe that sum  
Which is the lattermost of lives. It makes  
Its habitation as the worm spins silk  
And dwells therein. It takes

Function and substance as the snake's egg hatched  
Takes scale and fang; as feathered reed-seeds fly  
O'er rock and loam and sand, until they find  
Their marsh and multiply.

## BOOK THE EIGHTH

Also it issues forth to help or hurt.

When Death the bitter murderer doth smite,  
Red roams the unpurged fragment of him, driven  
On winds of plague and blight.

But when the mild and just die, sweet airs breathe;  
The world grows richer, as if desert-stream  
Should sink away to sparkle up again  
Purer, with broader gleam;

So merit won winneth the happier age  
Which by demerit halteth short of end;  
Yet must this Law of Love reign King of all  
Before the Kalpas end.

What lets?—Brothers! the Darkness lets! which  
breeds  
Ignorance, mazed whereby ye take these shows  
For true, and thirst to have, and having, cling  
To lusts which work you woes.

Ye that will tread the Middle Road, whose course  
Bright Reason traces and soft Quiet smoothes;  
Ye who will take the high Nirvâna-way,  
List the Four Noble Truths.

The First Truth is of *Sorrow*. Be not mocked!  
Life which ye prize is long-drawn agony:  
Only its pains abide; its pleasures are  
As birds which light and fly.



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

Ache of the birth, ache of the helpless days,  
Ache of hot youth and ache of manhood's prime;  
Ache of the chill grey years and choking death,  
These fill your piteous time.

Sweet is fond Love, but funeral-flames must kiss  
The breasts which pillow and the lips which cling;  
Gallant is warlike Might, but vultures pick  
The joints of chief and King.

Beauteous is Earth, but all its forest-broods  
Plot mutual slaughter, hungering to live;  
Of sapphire are the skies, but when men cry  
Famished, no drops they give.

Ask of the sick, the mourners, ask of him  
Who tottereth on his staff, lone and forlorn,  
'Liketh thee life?'—these say the babe is wise  
That weepeth, being born.

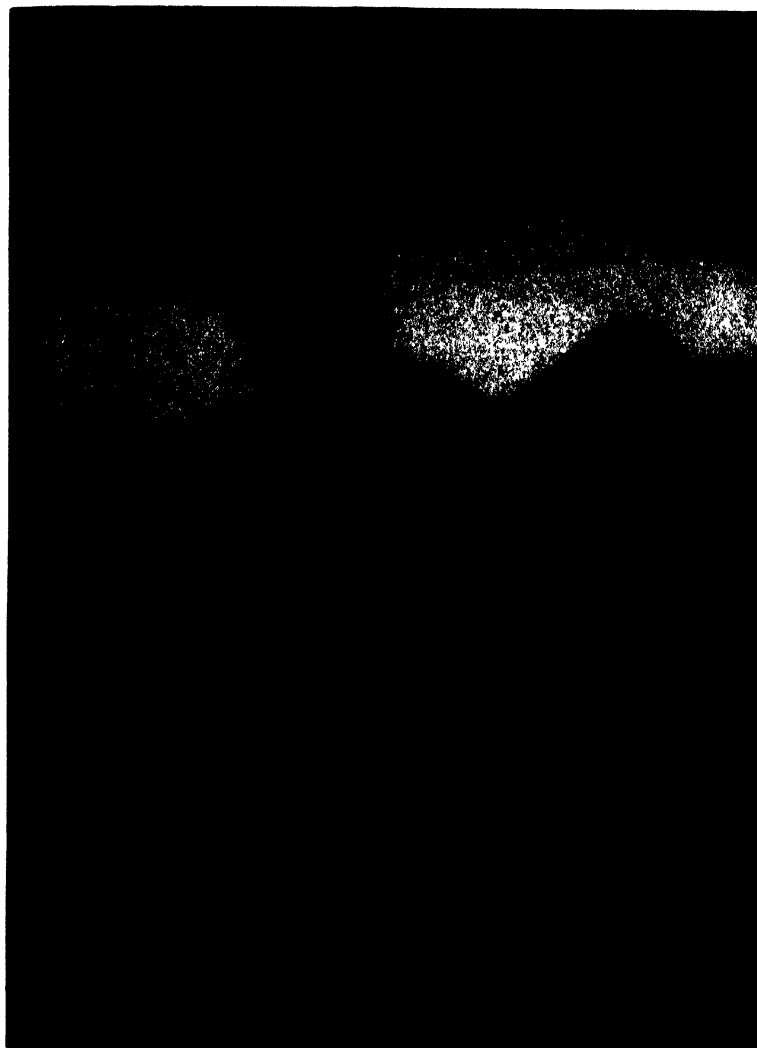
The Second Truth is *Sorrow's Cause*. What grief  
Springs of itself and springs not of Desire?  
Senses and things perceived mingle and light  
Passion's quick spark of fire:

So flameth Trishna, lust and thirst of things.  
Eager ye cleave to shadows, dote on dreams;  
A false Self in the midst ye plant, and make  
A world around which seems

Blind to the heights beyond, deaf to the sound  
Of sweet airs breathed from far past Indra's sky;  
Dumb to the summons of the true life kept  
For him who false puts by.

*Ask of him who tottereth on his staff*







## BOOK THE EIGHTH

So grow the strifes and lusts which make earth's war,  
So grieve poor cheated hearts and flow salt tears;  
So wax the passions, envies, angers, hates;  
So years chase blood-stained years

With wild red feet. So, where the grain should grow,  
Spreads the birân-weed with its evil root  
And poisonous blossoms; hardly good seeds find  
Soil where to fall and shoot;

And, drugged with poisonous drink, the soul departs,  
And, fierce with thirst to drink, Karma returns;  
Sense-struck again the sodden Self begins,  
And new deceits it earns.

The Third is *Sorrow's Ceasing*. This is peace  
To conquer love of self and lust of life,  
To tear deep-rooted passion from the breast,  
To still the inward strife;

For love to clasp Eternal Beauty close;  
For glory to be Lord of self; for pleasure  
To live beyond the gods; for countless wealth  
To lay up lasting treasure

Of perfect service rendered, duties done  
In charity, soft speech, and stainless days:  
These riches shall not fade away in life,  
Nor any death dispraise.

Then Sorrow ends, for Life and Death have ceased;  
How should lamps flicker when their oil is spent?  
The old sad count is clear, the new is clean;  
Thus hath a man content.

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## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

The Fourth Truth is *The Way*. It openeth wide,  
Plain for all feet to tread, easy and near,  
The *Noble Eightfold Path*; it goeth straight  
To peace and refuge. Hear!

Manifold tracks lead to yon sister-peaks  
Around whose snows the gilded clouds are curled;  
By steep or gentle slopes the climber comes  
Where breaks that other world.

Strong limbs may dare the rugged road which storms,  
Soaring and perilous, the mountain's breast;  
The weak must wind from slower ledge to ledge,  
With many a place of rest.

So is the Eightfold Path which brings to peace;  
By lower or by upper heights it goes.  
The firm soul hastes, the feeble tarries. All  
Will reach the sunlit snows.

The First good level is *Right Doctrine*. Walk  
In fear of Dharma, shunning all offence;  
In heed of Karma, which doth make man's fate;  
In lordship over sense.

The Second is *Right Purpose*. Have good-will  
To all that lives, letting unkindness die  
And greed and wrath; so that your lives be made  
Like soft airs passing by.

The Third is *Right Discourse*. Govern the lips  
As they were palace-doors, the King within;  
Tranquil and fair and courteous be all words  
Which from that presence win.

BOOK THE EIGHTH

The Fourth is *Right Behaviour*. Let each act  
Assoil a fault or help a merit grow:  
Like threads of silver seen through crystal beads  
Let love through good deeds show.

Four higher roadways be. Only those feet  
May tread them which have done with earthly  
things,  
*Right Purity, Right Thought, Right Loneliness,*  
*Right Rapture.* Spread no wings

For Sunward flight, thou soul with unplumed vans!  
Sweet is the lower air, and safe and known  
The homely levels; only strong ones leave  
The nest each makes his own.

Dear is the love, I know, of Wife and Child;  
Pleasant the friends and pastimes of your years,  
Fruitful of good Life's gentle charities;  
Firm-set, though false, its fears.

Live—ye who must—such lives as live on these;  
Make golden stairways of your weakness; rise  
By daily sojourn with those phantasies  
To lovelier verities.

So shall ye pass to clearer heights and find  
Easier ascents and lighter loads of sins,  
And larger will to burst the bonds of sense,  
Entering the Path. Who wins



## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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To such commencement hath the *First Stage* touched,  
He knows the Noble Truths, the Eightfold Road:  
By few or many steps such shall attain  
NIRVÂNA's blest abode.

Who standeth at the *Second Stage*, made free  
From doubts, delusions, and the inward strife,  
Lord of all lusts, quit of the priests and books,  
Shall live but one more life.

Yet onward lies the *Third Stage*: purged and pure  
Hath grown the stately spirit here, hath risen  
To love all living things in perfect peace.  
His life at end, life's prison

Is broken. Nay, there are who surely pass  
Living and visible to utmost goal  
By *Fourth Stage* of the Holy ones—the Buddhs—  
And they of stainless soul.

Lo! like fierce foes slain by some warrior,  
Ten sins along these Stages lie in dust,  
The Love of Self, False Faith, and Doubt are three,  
Two more Hatred and Lust.

Who of these Five is conqueror hath trod  
Three stages out of Four: yet there abide  
The Love of Life on earth, Desire for Heaven,  
Self-Praise, Error, and Pride.

As one who stands on yonder snowy horn  
Having naught o'er him but the boundless blue,  
So, these sins being slain, the man is come  
NIRVÂNA's verge unto.

## BOOK THE EIGHTH

Him the gods envy from their lower seats;  
Him the Three Worlds in ruin should not shake;  
All life is lived for him, all deaths are dead;  
Karma will no more make

New houses. Seeking nothing, he gains all;  
Foregoing self, the Universe grows 'I':  
If any teach NIRVĀNA is to cease,  
Say unto such they lie.

If any teach NIRVĀNA is to live,  
Say unto such they err; not knowing this,  
Nor what light shines beyond their broken lamps,  
Nor lifeless, timeless, bliss.

Enter the Path! There is no grief like Hate!  
No pains like passion, no deceit like sense!  
Enter the Path! far hath he gone whose foot  
Treads down one fond offence.

Enter the Path! There spring the healing streams  
Quenching all thirst! there bloom th' immortal  
flowers  
Carpeting all the way with joy! there throng  
Swiftest and sweetest hours!

More is the treasure of the Law than gems;  
Sweeter than comb its sweetness; its delights  
Delightful past compare. Thereby to live  
Hear the *Five Rules* aright:—

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

---

Kill not—for Pity's sake—and lest ye slay  
The meanest thing upon its upward way.

Give freely and receive, but take from none  
By greed, or force, or fraud, what is his own.

Bear not false witness, slander not, nor lie;  
Truth is the speech of inward purity.

Shun drugs and drinks which work the wit abuse;  
Clear minds, clean bodies, need no Sôma juice.

Touch not thy neighbour's wife, neither commit  
Sins of the flesh unlawful and unfit.

These words the Master spake of duties due  
To father, mother, children, fellows, friends;  
Teaching how such as may not swiftly break  
The clinging chains of sense—whose feet are weak  
To tread the higher road—should order so  
This life of flesh that all their hither days  
Pass blameless in discharge of charities  
And first true footfalls in the Eightfold Path;  
Living pure, reverent, patient, pitiful;  
Loving all things which live even as themselves;  
Because what falls for ill is fruit of ill  
Wrought in the past, and what falls well of good;  
And that by howsomuch the householder  
Purgeth himself of self and helps the world,  
By so much happier comes he to next stage,  
In so much bettered being. This he spake;

## BOOK THE EIGHTH

As also long before, when our Lord walked  
By Rajagriha in the bamboo-groove:  
For on a dawn he walked there and beheld  
The householder Singâla, newly bathed,  
Bowing himself with bare head to the earth,  
To Heaven, and all four quarters; while he threw  
Rice, red and white, from both hands. 'Wherefore  
thus

Bowest thou, Brother?' said the Lord; and he,  
'It is the way, Great Sir! our fathers taught  
At every dawn, before the toil begins,  
To hold off evil from the sky above  
And earth beneath, and all the winds which blow.'  
Then the World-honoured spake: 'Scatter not rice,  
But offer loving thoughts and acts to all:  
To parents as the East, where rises light;  
To teachers as the South, whence rich gifts come;  
To wife and children as the West, where gleam  
Colours of love and calm, and all days end;  
To friends and kinsmen and all men as North;  
To humblest living things beneath, to Saints  
And Angels and the blessed Dead above:  
So shall all evil be shut off, and so  
The six main quarters will be safely kept.'

But to his Own, Them of the yellow robe—  
Those who, as wakened eagles, soar with scorn  
From life's low vale, and wing towards the Sun—  
To these he taught the Ten Observances:  
The *Dasa-Sîl*, and how a mendicant  
Must know the *Three Doors* and the *Triple Thoughts*;  
The *Sixfold States of mind*; the *Fivefold Powers*;

## THE LIGHT OF ASIA

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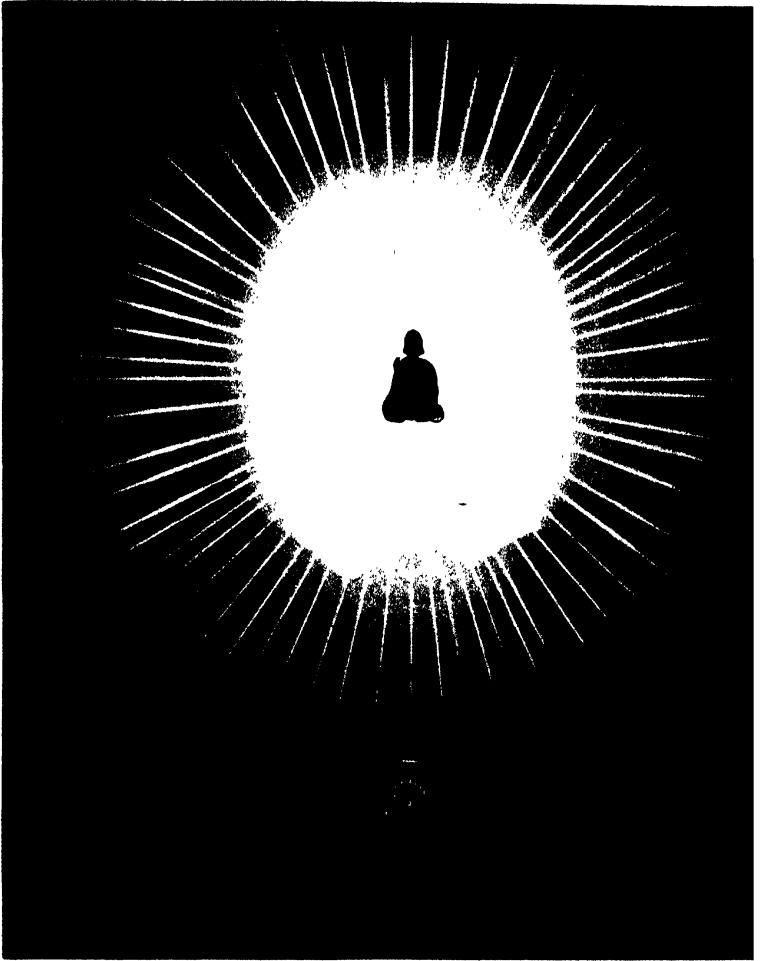
The *Eight High Gates of Purity*; the *Modes  
Of Understanding*; *Iddhi*; *Upekshâ*;  
The *Five Great Meditations*, which are food  
Sweeter than Amrit for the holy soul;  
The *Jhânas* and the *Three Chief Refuges*.  
Also he taught his Own how they should dwell;  
How live, free from the snares of love and wealth;  
What eat and drink and carry—three plain cloths,—  
Yellow, of stitched stuff, worn with shoulder bare—  
A girdle, almsbowl, strainer. Thus he laid  
The great foundations of our Sangha well,  
That noble Order of the Yellow Robe  
Which to this day standeth to help the World.

So all that night he spake, teaching the Law;  
And on no eyes fell sleep—for they who heard  
Rejoiced with tireless joy. Also the King,  
When this was finished, rose upon his throne  
And with bared feet bowed low before his Son,  
Kissing his hem; and said, 'Take me, O Son!  
Lowest and least of all thy Company.'  
And sweet Yasôdhara, all happy now,—  
Cried, 'Give to Rahula—thou Blessed One!  
The Treasure of the Kingdom of thy Word  
For his inheritance.' Thus passed these Three  
Into the Path.

Here endeth what I write  
Who love the Master for his love of us.  
A little knowing, little have I told  
Touching the Teacher and the Ways of Peace.

*Om Mani Padme Hum*









## BOOK THE EIGHTH

Forty-five rains thereafter showed he those  
In many lands and many tongues, and gave  
Our Asia Light, that still is beautiful,  
Conquering the world with spirit of strong grace:  
All which is written in the holy Books,  
And where he passed, and what proud Emperors  
Carved his sweet words upon the rocks and caves:  
And how—in fulness of the times—it fell  
The Buddha died, the great Tathâgato,  
Even as a man 'mongst men, fulfilling all:  
And how a thousand thousand lakhs since then  
Have trod the Path which leads whither he went  
Unto NIRVÂNA, where the Silence lives.

AH! BLESSED LORD! OH, HIGH DELIVERER!  
FORGIVE THIS FEEBLE SCRIPT, WHICH DOTHS THEE  
WRONG,  
MEASURING WITH LITTLE WIT THY LOFTY LOVE.  
AH! LOVER! BROTHER! GUIDE! LAMP OF THE LAW!  
I TAKE MY REFUGE IN THY NAME AND THEE!  
I TAKE MY REFUGE IN THY LAW OF GOOD!  
I TAKE MY REFUGE IN THY ORDER! *OM!*  
THE DEW IS ON THE LOTUS!—RISE, GREAT SUN!  
AND LIFT MY LEAF AND MIX ME WITH THE WAVE.  
OM MANI PADME HUM, THE SUNRISE COMES!  
THE DEWDROP SLIPS INTO THE SHINING SEA!

THE END







