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GAÚTAMA BUDDHA.

LONDON: PRINTED BY
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THE STORY
OF
GAÚTAMA BUDDHA

AND HIS CREED.

An Epic.

BY
RICHARD PHILLIPS.

LONDON :
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
1871.

P R E F A C E.



THE FOLLOWING POEM is an attempt at a reasonable narrative of Buddha and Buddhism, looking at these subjects of course from a poetical standpoint. Gaútama Buddha is at present hardly known to any but oriental scholars and literary men. The extravagant absurdities and contemptible puerilities of Buddhist sacred literature have effectually scared all but the most determined from an investigation of this subject; and as a natural consequence, 'the Founder of a religion, which, after more than 2,000 years, is still professed by 455,000,000 of human beings,' is ignored, misrepresented, and foolishly despised. The great Ascetic deserves to be better known. Both the attractive beauty of his life, and the tremendous influence of his creed, demand for him more attention than either thoughtful persons or even our wise men have hitherto accorded him. As yet

we have had little but reviews, essays, and encyclopædical articles. The literature of Buddhism being most voluminous, the materials for an extended biography are abundant ; but hitherto no oriental scholar has heroically girded himself to the herculean task of writing such a work, and thus endeavouring to separate the real from the legendary and mythical. The poem is based upon a theory ; but nothing short of a full conviction of the soundness of that theory would have led the author to represent Gaútama as a wilful deceiver, beguiling men to virtue ; and thus by impeaching his moral character, to lessen him in men's eyes. But if his moral character is lowered by this assumption, as undoubtedly it is, it must be allowed, as a slightly compensating fact, that his intellectual status is considerably raised by it. The reflections scattered through this poem, but more especially the last canto, will suffice to show that this is no attempt at an undue exaltation of Buddha, between whom and Christ there is in many particulars so striking a resemblance ; nor an indiscriminate laudation of that system which is so like Christianity in its ethics, but so unlike to it in its doctrines.

THE STORY
OF
GAŪTAMA BUDDHA

AND HIS CREED.



INTRODUCTION.

I

I AM no chronicler of deeds of blood
Wrought by the hands of those who, like a flood,
Swept from the Tatar plains, led by the man
Who made the Orient quake—great Gengis Khan ;
Or him who filled the frightened East with bones,
And piled his pyramids of skulls : no groans
Of Moslem-slaughtered hosts shall make men curse
Such ruthless tyrants, as they read my verse.

II

I sing not of great heroes who have warr'd,
And reapt the harvest of the bitter sword :
And yet I mean to tell a wondrous tale
Of Asian conquest ; ye shall surely fail
To count the captives : they are as the sands
Of sea-shores or of deserts, in the lands
Of gorgeous temples and of squalid homes,
And ruins, great as Egypt's or as Rome's.

III

Some men are mighty in their little day,
And some are mighty having passed away ;
And some are mighty but in sowing seed :
Great in his life, the founder of a creed
Is greater far in death ; for then each one
Will magnify the deeds that he has done,
Esteem all places sacred where he trod,
And look upon him as men look on God.

IV

Of such an one I tell what will not fail
To sound as marvellous as an Eastern tale,
Yet very pitiful ; and that above
The death of heroes, or the woes of love,
The moans of dying children, or the fall
Of some beleaguered city, when the wall
Becomes unmanned thro' famine ; or the hell
Of beaten armies that have battled well.

V

And yet I mean to tell a tale of one
Who prospered as none other yet has done,
Whose fame is not yet dead, nor shall decay
Until the Pyramids be worn away ;
For still beneath the calm of orient skies
His name is worshipt, and his temples rise :
Still on his words do many nations rest,
And deem him of all beings first and best.

VI

He was no Titan, tho' with gods he strove,
Nor born like Pallas from the head of Jove ;
Yet did his coming set the world at strife :
No blood-stained conqueror, prodigal of life,
And yet a conqueror, and one greater than
The son of Philip, or fierce Gengis Khan :
No brain-bred hero, red with dragon's gore ;
No wise magician skilled in magic lore.

VII

The glory of his reign has not yet ceast
In that great empire in the dreaming East,
Which, like strong lions ravenous for prey,
The merchants of young Tarshish bore away.
Thou, Ganges, knowest him ! O worshipt flood,
How blest is he that in thy sacred mud
At his last hour can lay him down to die,
And watch the current and his life go by !

VIII

In far-off lands may still be seen his vast
And rock-hewn temples, made in times long past ;
Now void and silent, save that thro' their halls
The ban-dog wanders, and the serpent crawls,
Safe from the bruising heel. These once were dim
With incense-smoke, and loud with prayer and hymn ;
And their cool floors, where now the lizards meet,
Once warmed beneath the tread of human feet.

IX

I will relate the story of his birth—
His words and ways : I will not hide his worth,
Nor magnify his sin ; but be as one
Who, groping thro' great ruins whence the sun
Has very long been banisht, thereamid
Lights on some statue that has long lain hid ;
And having cleansed it, does not rest till he
Has proudly set it where all eyes may see.

X

And if, restoring what is broken off,
I strive to make it perfect, who shall scoff?
Or bid me meddle not with the unknown?
Cannot the learnèd from a single bone
Describe the being wherein once it grew?
With ampler data, I have hope to do
An equal deed; yet if my feet should slide
Turn not the current of your wrath aside.

A WORD TO THE WISE.

I

‘There was once a king.’
O thou that seekest truth ! read on, I sing
No idle song, nor linger in the ways
Of fruitful dreamland. Fear thou not this phrase,
That prefaces old tales more fair than truth
To trustful childhood and day-dreaming youth ;
And wherein also thou didst take delight
Ere thou hadst learn’d to read the world aright.

II

But now since far and wide thy feet have ranged,
And all the fashion of thy world hath changed,
And thou with it ; thou canst not any more
Find pleasure as of old in that sweet lore
Wherein thou once wert wise : except it be
To charm therewith the child upon thy knee ;
Beholding whose delight, thou wouldst be fain
To find thyself a happy child again.

III

But, since thou art too wise to wander hence
In search of that famed fountain of Jouvence,
Whereof thou heardest in thy vanisht youth,
Thou criest out imploringly for truth,
And art as one who, rudely tost about
In weltering seas unholpen, stretches out
His hands for succour in the starless night,
And prays unceasingly for land and light.

IV

And in thy heart perchance is bitterness,
That thou for evermore must grope and guess :
I am as thou art, and but guess and grope ;
Yet seek truth ever, not uncheered by hope
Of profit in the end and by the way.
I will not lead thee very far astray,
If thou wilt let me take thee by the hand ;
Fear not this hitherto-untrodden land !

CANTO I.

I

There was once a king.
 He lived in that far land from whence men bring
 Sweet-smelling woods, and gums and stones of price .
 There dwell the wondrous birds of Paradise ;
 There Indus rolls—that grand historic flood,
 So often purpled with the alien's blood ;
 And sacred Ganges on its current bears
 A nation's blessings and a people's prayers.

II

By name Sudhódan ; of the warrior caste ;
 This king was monarch of Kapilavast,
 Which lies beneath the mountains of Nepaul.
 Albeit his dominions were but small ;
 For any man might readily essay
 To walk the boundaries in a single day :
 And here he flourisht, as the records show,
 Two thousand and five hundred years ago.

III

Now it fell out upon a morn that one
 Brought tidings that his queen had borne a son ;
 Whereat the monarch was exceeding glad.
 So, calling to his minister, he bade
 That great rejoicing should forthwith be made
 Thro' all his realm ; and costly presents laid
 In all the temples. Thus the king exprest
 The grateful feelings of his royal breast.

IV

So when the minister had made profound
 Obeisance ; going forth, he sought and found
 A ready scribe, and bade him write with haste
 A proclamation, which, when done, he placed
 Before the king ; who praised his servant's zeal,
 And sealed the writing with his royal seal :
 Whereon the heralds of the court began
 To make the order known, and thus it ran :—

V

' Sudhódana, to all in every place
 Who bow before his mighty sceptre ; grace,
 Health, and all blessings that the gods bestow.
 Now when ye look upon this writing, know
 That in my house is born a son and heir.
 Now, therefore, make rejoicing, and prepare
 The dance and song ; so all the world shall see
 That ye are loyal to my house and me.'

VI

And as the day began to cool, the king
Put on his kingly robes, and bade them bring
His royal beast ; and throned thereon in state,
He rode with clangour thro' his palace gate,
Towards the town, attended by his lords
And armèd soldiers bearing naked swords :
And lo ! the joyous town in all its girth
Shook with the sòunds of feasting and of mirth.

VII

Then smiled the king. And when he drew anigh,
The people saw him, and began to cry
The king ! the king ! and all the town was moved,
And rose to greet him ; for he was beloved.
Then thro' the streets he rode, and as he went
He scattered silver ; so the people rent
The air with shouts, and prest him till they trode
Upon each other in the crowded road.

VIII

The circle of the city made, the king
Rode homeward to his palace, pondering
On what should happen when his child was grown ;
How he should live to sit upon his throne ;
And reign and prosper, bringing no disgrace
Upon the monarchs of the Sakya race ;
Extend his kingdom, and when life was done,
Bequeath his might and wisdom to his son.

IX

O king, thou errest ; this shall never be !
Thy son shall never fill a throne like thee,
Nor be contented with such princely state ;
Yet shall he rule great empires, and grow great
Beyond thy dreaming ; for throughout the East
He shall be honoured more than king or priest ;
His empire stand when time has overthrown
The petty pryncedom thou dost call thine own.

X

How rosest thou, O memorable morn !
Upon the day this royal child was born ?
Upon thy front was there inscribed no strange
And awful sign portending mighty change ?
Or didst thou rise in silence and in gloom ;
And heavy with the thunder-clouds of doom,
And wrath and judgment, to be swiftly hurl'd
Against the quaking dwellers of the world ?

XI

Or camest thou from Sinim, whilst the snow
Of Himalaya redden'd in thy glow,
Serene and passionless, and with no trace
Of aught but blessing in thy welcome face ?
Prophetic of a better age at hand ;
A milder era for a troubled land ;
A respite for the hearts then made to bleed
Beneath the rigour of a cruel creed ?

XII

Of such-like witness there was little need ;
Yet, turning to the sacred books, I read
That all the heav'ns were filled with roseate light
Throughout all space, and everywhere the night
Shone as the day ; and all the worlds shook, thrill'd
With deep delight ; and all the air was fill'd
With odours, whereof ev'n the gods were fain ;
And in all worlds there fell a blessèd rain.

XIII

Afflicted beings gained their long-lost powers ;
The earth and sea were carpeted with flowers,
And seem'd a very garden ; all pain ceast ;
The languishers in dungeons were releast ;
The hells were all put out ; and, for a space,
A heavenly calm fell on each anguisht face,
As from their homes of torment, now grown cool,
They bless'd the Buddha that was born to rule.

XIV

So all without was glad : but wild dismay
Was in the room where Máya-dévi lay,
Surrounded by her women ; weak and wan,
As one from whom the heart of life is gone,
She spake not to her maids ; nor turned her eyes
Upon her child ; nor heeded she its cries ;
Nor watcht the dusky forms that moved about,
Nor markt the revel that went on without.

XV

So daylight changed to darkness. Then said one :
' Fear not, O queen, for thou hast borne a son !
And all the land is glad. And now, behold !
Thy lord is gone to sow the streets with gold,
And thank the blessed gods. Take heart, O Dove !
This child shall live to pay thee back with love.'
But Máya answered but with sighs, and lay
And languisht thus until the seventh day.

XVI

Then spake she to her women, saying, ' I
Would look upon my son before I die.
So in her arms they laid him, weeping sore ;
And watcht her hands that slowly wandered o'er
His tiny features and along each limb,
As if uncertain ; for her eyes grew dim,
But not with sleep. Then her embraces waxt
More feeble ; and at length her hold relaxt.

XVII

And then He entered who is called Mavéth
Maras, and Thanatos, and Mors, and Death :
He comes to all men ; yea, for thee He waits.
He passed unchallenged thro' the guarded gates ;
He made no parley at the well-kept doors ;
But strode unhindered o'er the marble floors,
And came at length into that inner room :
Then deeper grew the silence and the gloom.

XVIII

And all was husht and still ; for, like a pall,
The terror of his presence fell on all,
As, sorrowfully and with bated breath,
They whispered to each other, ' This is Death ! '
And shuddered as they spake that awful name.
Then He departed even as He came,
Uncheckt, unchallenged, thro' the gates ; and then
Between the sabres of the armèd men.

XIX

But there rose up behind him sounds of woe
And bitter grief ; and men went to and fro
With garments rent and ashes on the head,
And other signs whereby they mourn the dead
In lands where mourners never hide their grief,
And none need blush at sorrow : but in chief,
The wailing women, with their purchast tears
And hired voices, smote all hearts and ears.

XX

Thereon the king spake with his other bride
(The same was sister to the one that died),
And took the child and laid him on her knee,
Saying : ' O woman ! if thou lovest me,
Look with compassion on this helpless one,
And let him be to thee as thine own son ;
And be to him a mother ; yea, and prove
Thou lackest nothing of a mother's love.'

XXI

So she received, and nurst him as her own :
And musing, ‘ When thou art to manhood grown,
Wilt thou repay me for this love and care ? ’
Would often look into his face, and there
Seek answer ; but such queries always met
With such an answer as such always get—
Sweet guileless looks, and little arms held out,
As if to chide us for the cruel doubt.

XXII

O happy children, fenced about with love :
Kind arms are underneath you, and above
Kind faces bend like overarching skies,
And rain down kisses : ever-watchful eyes
Keep guard around lest evil should assail.
Too soon the dew of kisses will exhale !
Too soon will ye discover how the dearth
Of love can wither up a blooming earth !

XXIII

Ye are watcht o’er by those whose quickened sense
Makes them a kind of lesser Providence
Or guardian angels, fully skilled to read
The slightest signals of yet distant need,
And all the languages of cries and looks,
And other knowledge never found in books,
Nor taught by sages, but which forms a part
Of what is graven on a mother’s heart.

XXIV

Just as the cailow, unfledged birds of spring
Lie warm beneath the parent's sheltering wing,
And fear no evil, tho' the boughs be bent
With tempests, and the blackened heav'ns be rent ;
So, folded in the arms of love, ye rest,
Nor fear the falling of your dreamy nest ;
But dream by night and day, and know no doubt,
Tho' mighty tempests shake the world without.

XXV

So Gaútama, as this young prince was called,
Soon left his nurse's arms, and rolled and crawled
And tumbled round the chambers ; till, ere long,
His feet waxt firmer and his hands grew strong ;
And he began to go alone, and stand
Unaided, and let go the guiding hand ;
And grew to notice each new sight and sound,
And noted all things that went on around.

XXVI

And then his narrow world began to grow
And widen ; and he came at length to know
That it was greater than his native town :
That men were many, and some seemed cast down
And gloomy-featured ; but he knew not why ;
For, blest with all a palace could supply,
He knew not sorrow ; nor yet understood
That all things are not fair, nor all men good.

XXVII

But time, that teaches all men, made him wise ;
And thought and reason grew ; and his young eyes
Had clearer vision of all things, until
He gained the knowledge of both good and ill ;
And thereupon knew hope and fear and doubt,
And learn'd of that great world that lies without ;
And of that world, which, lying past the ken,
Is full of mystery for the sons of men.

XXVIII

Full often he would wander up and down
The sculptured temples of his native town,
Pondering on all things that he heard and saw,
But understood not ; and beheld with awe
The many-headed, many-handed gods ;
And watcht the crowds that sought their cool abodes
To bring their offerings of fruits and flowers,
And seek the favour of the higher powers.

XXIX

There solemn Brahmans chanted Vedic hymns ;
And lean ascetics sat with shrunken limbs,
Too deeply pondering on the vanity
Of life and of all earthly things to see
The awe-struck multitudes that prest them round :
While all the time the sacred heifers, crowned
With garlands, and untrammelled by the yoke,
Pusht unmolested thro' the crowding folk.

XXX

Now King Sudhódan, willing he should grow
Well taught in all things that a prince should know,
Sought out grave pundits—learnèd men, well-skill'd
To teach the knowledge wherewith they were fill'd.
These taught him knowledge ; and their eyes grew bright
As they beheld him list'ning with delight,
While day by day from out their ample store
They drew the treasures of old Indian lore.

XXXI

Nor did they fail to note his eager looks
Whene'er they taught him from the sacred books,
Or told him of the gods that dwell on high,
Or of the hells wherein the wicked lie,
Or of some saint that fasted, and prevailed,
And heapt up merit, till the strong gods quailed
Before him, and were fain to do his will,
And owned his might upon the sacred hill.

XXXII

They told him how their sires had wandered forth,
A shepherd people, from the west and north,
And pitcht their tents beside the sacred flood :
And how they found the land exceeding good,
And smote and drove its former dwellers out,
Or made them serfs and bondmen ; and about
The land they left, when they went forth to find
New pastures, and of those who stay'd behind.

XXXIII

They stirred his heart within him as they taught
What deeds the peoples of his race had wrought,
Each fighting each, or all the common foe :
They told of kings and heroes, who although
They then had long been dead, yet still prolong
Their days on earth in some heroic song ;
And some of whom now hold an honoured place
Among the gods of their degenerate race.

XXXIV

And many other things were learnt by him
Whereof the knowledge now has waxen dim,
Or faded wholly from the minds of men ;
Albeit what we teach our youth was then
But little thought of : men cared not to roam,
And those who might have travelled stayed at home,
And seemed contented with their simple lore,
Yet their sires left them but a meagre store.

XXXV

High mountains, white with never-melted snow,
Loomed in the distance ; but few cared to know
What nations dwelt—what people lived and died—
And how the world went, on the further side.
The fisher hugged the shore, and fearfully
Men gazed across the dread and unknown sea ;
While east and west the jealous nations stood,
And eyed each other in no friendly mood.

XXXVI

Now all their teaching was an easy task ;
For when sometimes the prince would gravely ask
Them something which they knew not, they essayed
To make such answer as is always made
When men know nothing, yet would fain conceal
The want of knowledge they dare not reveal,
Lest, peradventure, they appear less wise
Than they were wont to, in the asker's eyes.

XXXVII

So lived the prince ; and if report speaks truth,
He grew to be a fair and goodly youth,
And failed in nothing that a prince should be,
Albeit all the Court perceived that he
Was of a meditative mind, and prone
To wander by himself, and sit alone ;
And those who eyed him carefully could trace
A shade of sadness in his thoughtful face.

XXXVIII

And when the duties of the day were done,
And men sought rest and ease, and sire and son
Sat down together, whiling time away
With talk upon the matters of the day,
The king would turn him to the prince, and ask
About the matters of his daily task,
And how the pundits taught him ; whereto he
Made fitting answer, as the case might be.

XXXIX

And Gaúrama would also, in his turn,
 Ask him of somewhat that he fain would learn,
 Of life or death, or of the life beyond ;
 Whereto the king would laughingly respond :
 ‘ O little pundit ! very much I fear,
 Unless thou changest, thou wilt turn fakeer,
 And, lean and naked, roam and beg thy food,
 Or fast and famish in some savage wood.’

XL

But sometimes he would answer with a frown :
 ‘ O prince ! thy head is destined for a crown,
 And thou shalt sit upon a throne, and hold
 Within thy hand a sceptre made of gold,
 And sit as judge dispensing life and death.
 Attend thou, then, to what the Veda saith,
 And what the Brahmans teach thee, for such things
 Are surely fitting to be known by kings :

XLI

‘ But leave such things, whereof thou askest now,
 To monks and priests, and all who make a vow
 To waste this life in dreaming of the next.
 Why suffer thy young spirit to be vext
 With fancies, which, if I am not deceived,
 Bring little profit?’ for the king was grieved
 To see the child so pensive, and to find
 That such grave matters filled his youthful mind.

XLII

And as he mused thereon, within his heart
He said : ' Full well these Brahmans play their part.
These men, I know, are zealous for the truth,
Or what they call such ; and they fill the youth
With priestly fables and unwholesome dreams.
Go to ! but I will thwart their cunning schemes,
For well I know whereto their teachings tend,
And what they look for in the hoped-for end.'

XLIII

So he dismissed those pundits, and assign'd
Their task to men according to his mind,
And kept the lad from such as might have fed
And fostered what he did not cease to dread,
And noted those of whom he stood in doubt.
Instead of these, he compassed him about
With gay companions—youths of noble birth—
All merry fellows, full of life and mirth.

XLIV

The king moreover, seeing that the lad,
In spite of all his sombre fancies, had
A prudent and an understanding heart,
Instructed him betimes to take his part
In courtly pageants and in state affairs ;
And thought, by such like joyaunces and cares,
To win him gently from the dang'rous way
Wherein his feet too long had gone astray.

XLV

But all his efforts were of no avail,
Else here had been the ending of my tale,
Or rather it had never been begun.
Time brought no change ; for still his thoughts would run
Beyond the happiness wherewith he found
The kindly gods had girt his life around,
To wander thro' the earth, and meditate
Upon the miseries of man's estate.

XLVI

Yet lackt he nothing wherein youth delights :
The days were filled with pleasures, and the nights
Renewed his vigour with untroubled rest ;
Nor lackt the Court in fitting mirth and jest ;
Nor lackt he change ; for often he would ride
About the country at his father's side,
Or mid the orchards and the lakes and flow'rs
Of the king's gardens play away the hours.

XLVII

These gardens lay outside the town, and far
From all such sights and noises as might mar
The peace of those who walkt therein, and all
Around about was built a mighty wall
Too high for any beast to climb or leap :
Moreover, men were set therein to keep
And tend them duly at the king's expense.
Herein were gathered all the joys of sense ;

XLVIII

For here were fields of flowers, whose gorgeous dyes
Smote dazzlingly upon the gazer's eyes ;
The air was noisy with the plundering bees,
And faint with odours, and the languid breeze,
Passing beyond the bounds of that fair place,
Would cause the passer-by to slack his pace,
And curse the wall, that from his longing sight
Shut out the vision of so much delight.

XLIX

And in the midst, and all along the wall,
Were trees and shrubs and creepers, whereon all
The luscious fruits that Eastern lands produce
Made haste to ripen for the royal use.
And here were lakes, fed by clear-running rills
That had their birthplace in the distant hills ;
While trees, whose roots drank deeply from each pool,
With grateful branches kept the water cool.

L

And trees were there, whose twisted branches made
For all beneath a paradise of shade,
A welcome refuge from the dreaded sun.
Here might one sleep until the day was done,
Then wake besprinkled with the petals shed
From off the boughs that blossomed overhead,
And hear the birds call, or with dreamy eyes,
Behold the sun set or the moon arise.

LI

Long ages past, for luxury and ease
King Solomon made gardens such as these,
And sought therein for pleasure, but he err'd.
In such, relying on the prophet's word,
The Moslem looks to dwell when he shall die ;
And such the traveller, as he passes by,
His feet sore-wounded by the burning clods,
Counts worthy to be dwellings of the gods.

CANTO II.

I

THE king, perceiving how the matter went,
Was grieved exceedingly, but still intent
On thwarting what some folks would designate
The will of heaven, or the prince's fate.
Not so, be sure, Sudhódan understood
The matter, for he sought the prince's good ;
Not doubting that his son had gone astray,
Thro' lack of wisdom, from true wisdom's way.

II

And if ye ask me, 'Wherefore should the king
Have deemed this habit such an evil thing,
And tried so zealously to check its growth
With little profit and much pain to both ?'
Know ye, that in those days, and in that land,
When any brooded on the future, and
Perceived the utter vanity of life,
And grew weary of its evil strife,

III

It was their custom to withdraw from all
The bonds and ties that held their souls in thrall,
And spend their days in poverty, and live
Upon such alms as kindly folk might give ;
That undistracted they might meditate
On life and death and on the future state,
And pass their time in fastings and in prayers,
And careful tending of the soul's affairs.

IV

But some of these, who had at heart to gain
Unwonted merit by unwonted pain,
And sighed for greater sanctity, imbued
With pious fervour, sought the solitude
Of forests, where but rarely man appeared
To mind them of the world they shunn'd and feared,
Because of all the vanity and sin
And deep delusion that abode therein.

V

And here they dwelt, free from all worldly cares ;
By fasts and cruel penances and prayers
And meditations, striving to unmesh
Their spirits from the longings of the flesh,
And wean them from the hurtful influence
Of all the empty shows of time and sense ;
And wanted nothing, having for their use
Such food and clothing as the woods produce.

VI

And this they reckoned was a quicker way
Of reaching what they sighed for night and day—
Exemption from the burden of desire,
And all the ills of being, and entire
Deliverance from evil ; for they felt
Existence burdensome, and lookt to melt
Into the Deity, and merge their whole
Existence in the Universal Soul.

VII

For in those days and lands this was the creed
Wherein men trusted—whereto they agreed :
Of Brahm, the source of all things and the end,
All souls formed part, and were ordained to blend
With him in happy union at the last ;
Meanwhile, for ages numberless, they passed
Thro' every form of being—from the clods
That vile feet trode on up to mighty gods.

VIII

On this men brooded till they grew to feel
Existence, like an ever-turning wheel,
Brought endless change, but never any rest ;
For even when their lives seemed at the best,
The sins committed in some former state,
But long-forgotten, might but be in wait
To spring upon them. Where could they find peace,
When death itself could bring them no release ?

IX

Nor was this tendency at all confin'd
To men of wicked lives, who had a mind
Thus to atone for their impiety,
Nor yet to age or men of low degree :
The pure, the young, the wealthy and the great,
All sought admission to this holy state.
Nor was it such a strange unheard-of thing
To find the fashion set them by a king.

X

No marvel, therefore, that the king, who knew
All this and more, saw with no friendly view
The prince's pensive manner. Soon or late
He feared the youth would quit his high estate,
Renounce his caste, and take the beggar's bowl,
And seek thereby to gain the wisht-for goal
Of his desires, and win some dreamed-of good :
All this he augured from his present mood.

XI

Full sixteen years had fled in smoothest flight
Since Gaútama first lookt upon the light :
Sweet childhood had gone by, and now behold
A subtle change—youth hasting to unfold,
And blossom into manhood. He began
To feel the hopes and passions of a man ;
To count up all that might be lost and won,
And dream of great things that might yet be done.

XII

His thoughts, moreover, took a wider range,
A deeper depth, but never any change.
Then mused the king : 'Go to ! thou shalt be wed,
And that, perchance, will clear thy foolish head
Of all this folly. Children's feeble hands
Shall prove to be more strong than iron bands ;
And these shall bind thee to the things of earth,
Which thou misdeemest to be little worth.'

XIII

And so from thenceforth he lookt round to find
Some lovely princess, and one well design'd
To win Siddhártha from his wandering ;
And chose the daughter of a neighbouring king,
The fair Yasódhará, whose beauty stirr'd
The hearts of princes, and who oft had heard
The sighings of rejected kings and seen
Their wistful glances and their woeful mien.

XIV

So he sought for her hand. Now when her sire,
King Supra Buddha, knew of his desire,
He was right joyful, for his wishes ran
Towards alliance with the Sákya clan ;
But set his features, so that no man learned
The secret feelings of his mind, and turned
Towards the messengers who stood anigh,
And waited doubtingly for his reply,

XV

With doubtful answer, such as would suffice
To keep them hopeful : he would take advice
Upon the matter, as he stood in doubt
Of certain rumours that were noised about :
So with this answer they rode back ; but he
Called friends and kinsfolk, that this thing might be
Discussed and settled ; and when duly prest,
Each gave such counsel as he reckoned best.

XVI

The first Sudhódan summoned, answered : ‘Since
Thou askest my opinion of the prince,
I needs must tell thee that report affirms
His great demerit in no doubtful terms.
Men say the youth, tho’ sensible and kind,
Is of a dull and melancholy mind,
And lacks a manly spirit ; and in short
Adds little lustre to his father’s Court.

XVII

‘Wherefore, my counsel is, that such an one
Is not well suited to be made thy son.’
Thereat a murmur of assent went round,
And all awhile were silent, then one found
A voice, and said : ‘O king ! the prince in truth
Appears a worthy and right noble youth,
But far too thoughtful ; and I am afraid,
Too sad a countenance to please a maid.

XVIII

‘ Yet if he wed thy daughter, we may find
That she may win him to a happier mind.’
Then one put in this word : ‘ The king, I hope,
Cares not for sons-in-law that pine and mope,
And if he be a youth, condemned by fate
To be unsocial and effeminate ;
Reject him kindly. But who knows? ere now,
The best of men have worn a moody brow.’

XIX

Then said another : ‘ I myself have had
Some dealings with the prince. I know the lad
Is learnèd in the Vedas ; and he looks
Like one who loves to fill his head with books,
And ponders more than others of his age,
And yet, if he be tempted to engage
In other matters, in his face I read
Somewhat that tells me that he would succeed.

XX

‘ This lack of spirit that ye take so ill
May be assumed.’ So they talkt on until
One spoke and said : ‘ About a moon from hence
Ye hold a festival to evidence
Your gratitude for Dévadatta’s birth ;
Whereat, besides such feasting and ripe mirth
As all may share in, if report speaks truth,
Ye meditate some sports wherein our youth

· XXI

‘ May prove to all their strength and skill, and show
What they are made of : now, if this be so,
Invite the young prince hither, on pretence
That ye would fain have more intelligence
Of him, and of his ways ; and when he tries
Among his fellows to bear off the prize,
Then watch him closely, so that ye may see
What sort of person he is like to be.

XXII

‘ And if he act in all things like a man,
And take and keep his footing in the van,
Among the foremost, well ; if not, with shame
Let him go empty back from whence he came.
This is my counsel, sire.’ Then all and each
Bare witness to the wisdom of his speech ;
So this the king agreed to do, and pray’d
That preparation should forthwith be made.

XXIII

Now when the messenger arrived, and brought
Sudhódan tidings how his master sought
Their presence at the feast, that monarch sent
Back courteous answer : Since the king was bent
On heaping favours on himself and son,
His will, obeyed in all else, should be done
In this thing also ; and both should be found
Among the guests whenas the time came round.

XXIV.

Then finding out his son, who sat alone
Intent upon his books, the king made known
The message and his answer, adding : ' Son,
I pray thee for a time at least to shun
Thy books and studies, and to give thy mind
To other matters, wherein thou wilt find
More profit. Well thou knowest of what sort
The games will be at Supra Buddha's court.

XXV

' Now if thou lovest me, arise and make
Due preparation that thou mayest take
Thy part in these : yea and now see to it
Thou bear thee manfully, and come no whit
Behind thy fellows ; why should I alone
Of all the kings be sad, and blush to own
My fatherhood ? or thou with envious eyes
Behold a meaner bear away the prize ?

XXVI

' No fear that men mistake thee for a churl ;
Yet some may take thee for a tender girl
Unless thou mendest. Thou but lackest will.
I seek thy welfare : do not take it ill
That I thus chide thee ! If the truth be told
Thou mayest win a better prize than gold.'
With such like words and many more he tried
To rouse the prince's chivalry and pride ;

XXVII

And prospered well, for in the end the prince
Rolled up his littered books and answered, since
His father wisht it, he would do his best
To prove himself a not unhonoured guest :
And then began with zeal, for time was short,
To exercise and practise, in such sort
That people marvelled at his altered mood,
But deemed the change a wholesome one and good.

XXVIII

And now, if any in his secret mind
Think of this prince as dull, and so inclined
To sombre studies, as to be unfit
For manly exercise and courtly wit ;
Of gloomy aspect, fitted to repel
Warm friendship ; and not likely to excel,
If even he were tempted to engage
In pastimes proper to his rank and age ;

XXIX

He errs ; and I have failed to tell, or he
To read, this tale aright. As all could see,
The prince, tho' often of a pensive mood,
And prone to ponder more than men thought good
In one so young, was very seldom loth
To prove his strength and skill (for he had both)
In manly pastime and in daring sport,
Or mix in matters of a merry sort.

XXX

And if he sometimes had no heart for such,
It was because he brooded^d overmuch
On matters whereto youth gives little heed ;
And not from want of spirit. For indeed,
No sickly frame had doomed that he should find
Life bitter, or had cramp^t and soured his mind,
And made him doubt if anything was fair,
And hate the pleasures which he could not share.

XXXI

As healthy souls, that draw untroubled breath,
Are saddened most at thoughts of coming death,
For loving life most, they most fear its loss,
And tremble as the Shadow sweeps across
The sunny pastures of the joyful earth ;
So was it with the prince, who knew no dearth
Of that which makes men fall in love with life,
Tho' it be dasht with sorrow and hard strife.

XXXII

Now when the day came whereof ye have heard ;
Not unforgetful of his kinsman's word,
King Supra Buddha, as the guests arrived
And took their seats about the hall, contrived
To set Siddhártha in a forward place,
Where he might note him well, and scan his face,
And try by careful scrutiny to win
Some knowledge of the mind concealed within.

XXXIII

But on the second day, before the sun
Rose high in heav'n, and ere the games begun,
With noise and tumult all the guests made haste
To find their places ; and the athletes paced
About in groups, or went alone, intent
On their own thoughts ; and some made merriment
Of one another's hopes and fears, while some
Lookt fearfully to see the judges come.

XXXIV

And from the waiting multitude arose
An endless and tumultuous noise, as those
Who recognised their friends would point them out,
Or criticise the youths that strode about,
Predicting who would lose and who would win,
As knowing well, before it should begin,
How all would go. And there among the rest,
Sat King Sudhódan, as an honour'd guest.

XXXV

Beside the king he sat, and lookt cast down
For fear his son should fail to win renown.
Yet, when he saw him standing tall and strong
Among the rest, would think, ' I do him wrong ;
He will maintain the honour of our clan.'
And so alternately his feelings ran
From hope to fear ; yet ever he essay'd
To look as one who feels no whit afraid.

XXXVI

But Gaútama awaited with the rest
The judges' coming, giving jest for jest ;
And when one feigned that there was little hope
For common mortals, when they had to cope
With such as he, he answered, feigning ruth :
' When we run in the race, O modest youth,
I foremost, and thou panting on my track,
Be not discouraged, for I will hang back,

XXXVII

' And lose in order that thou mayest win.
Go home, thou girl, and help the women spin ;
Or work the hangings for thy mother's bed.'
But ere the laughter ceast another said :
' It seems to me, prince, that thou lookest pale.
He has been fasting, friends, lest he should fail
In winning. So we strive against great odds,
He will no doubt be succoured by the gods.'

XXXVIII

' Yea,' said one gravely, winking at his mates,
' We godless youths, who do not vex our pates
With pious duties, have no hope, but must
Behold the prizes handed to the just.
For strength is much, but piety is more.'
But he, ' Poor penitent ! thou grievest sore ;
Thou moralisest well for one so young
And one so wicked. Hold thy prating tongue.'

XXXIX

Then rose a cry, ' Behold ! the judges come !'
So all rusht to their places ; and the hum
Ceast wholly ; and the hearts of all beat fast
With expectation as the judges past
Right through their midst, and sat down on their thrones ;
And rising presently, in solemn tones
Read out the rules—showed what there was to win—
And bade the contest should at once begin.

XL

But how they raced and wrestled on that day,
And on the next ; and in what other way
They proved their prowess, winning men's applause ;
There is no need that I should tell, because
Ye know full well how such like things are done,
And maybe once loved such, which now ye shun,
Because of eld ; or from a graver mind ;
Or that Dame Fortune showed herself unkind.

XLI

So tho' ye praise the best, ye cannot choose
But feel some sympathy with those who lose,
Albeit such are hard to cheer. But now
Ye wish to know of Gaútama, and how
He prospered : know ye then and understand
That in all things whereto he set his hand
He wrought right manfully, nor fail'd to win,
So that all marvelled, even his own kin.

XLII

For whether he ran in the headlong race ;
Or clutcht his fellow in a rough embrace ;
Or hurled the mighty stone ; or threw the dart ;
Or cast the spear ; or played the archer's part ;
Or swung the weighted clubs ; or bore the load ;
Or yet recited some heroic ode ;
Or exercised himself in other ways,
He never failed to win the people's praise.

XLIII

Moreover men relate how that he drew
A bow like that wherewith Ulysses slew
The suitors ; for when others failed to bend
The stubborn wood, or drawing, in the end
Beheld their shafts fall, having feebly sped,
He drew the barbèd arrow to the head,
And sent it hissing far beyond their gaze.
So he wrought mightily in those two days ;

XLIV

And proved the folly of his father's fears,
And made his praises ring in all men's ears,
Till Supra Buddha loved his future son ;
For he had proved he was not such an one
As he imagined or as some supposed.
So with a festival the day was closed,
And the poor losers for a time at least
Forgot their sorrows in the mirthful feast.

XLV

And after they had feasted many days,
The feast broke up ; and all men went their ways,
To live or languish as they erst had done.
But King Sudhódan lingered, for his son
Had been accepted, and they now exchanged
The customary pledges, and arranged
The date and dowry ; and with much ado
They settled all things that pertained thereto.

XLVI

And as they planned it so it came about.
The prince was wedded in due course ; 'no'doubt,'
The records tell us, 'much against his will.'
Believe them not, they surely err : yet still
If so it was, youth grieves not long time, where
The bride tho' dark is comely and doth bear
A mind whose beauty glads the inner sight,
And a fair body fashioned for delight.

CANTO III.

I

O BEAUTIFUL the bride was, tho' the sun
Had lookt upon her : her free feet had run
The flowery meads : the lusty winds had play'd
Thro' her dark tresses loosened from the braid,
And blown her raiment round her dusky limbs.
Her maids, the servants of her wants and whims,
Followed her as the wood-nymphs long ago
Followed the Lady of the Silver Bow.

II

And she had climbed the hills ; and in her heat
And weariness feared not to dip her feet
Within the brooks ; and, bare and unabasht,
Sat by the streamside with her maids, or dasht
With shouts and laughter down into the flood :
And had some beauty-loving Greek but stood
And seen from far, he had not failed to deem
They were the sportive naiads of that stream.

III

But Alexander's Greeks were yet to be ;
And other men came not anigh to see,
For maiden-sentinels watcht round that place.
So she grew healthfully, and waxt in grace
And comeliness : yet not in these alone,
But in all knowledge that might then be known ;
For she was taught in all the lore that then
Passed for right knowledge with the sons of men.

IV

And young men praised her comely face and form ;
And old men praised her kindly heart and warm,
And calm and thoughtful looks. Now this was ere
The jealous Moslem taught them to beware
Of women ; and to keep them jealously
Where none might see them, and where they might see
None but their nearest kin ; lest some adept
Should steal the treasure so unduly kept.

V

Whereby it haps that mind and body both
Grow sickly, and attain not their full growth :
One shows itself beneath the vacant stare ;
One pines for contact with the sun and air ;
And their brief beauty will not long time hold ;
Contempt soon rises and man's love grows cold.
So they become as toys wherewith they play
Who are but children of a longer day :

VI

And in a little time are cast aside
Into some darkened corner there to bide,
Until their worthless lives run out unwept ;
Then the poor prisoner so securely kept
Goes forth for ever from her gilded gaol.
But get thee to the telling of thy tale :
Leave grey-beard Folly, and its fruit alone.
Shall not a man be master of his own ?

VII

Now loved by one who, tho' the gift be rare,
Had more than comeliness to make her fair,
And more than smiles or words to prove her kind,
The prince Siddhártha gat a cheerful mind.
Seen thro' the gladness wherewith he was glad
Life seemed not half so vain or half so sad
As he had deemed it erst ; nay, for a space
The whole world seemed to wear another face.

VIII

For when Yasódhará the princess came
To know the grief he buried, not from shame
But that he feared she might misdoubt his love
(For even her sweetness could not always move
His mind to gladness, or her arms attract),
She set herself with all a woman's tact
To soothe his grief or haply bear a part
And lessen thus the burden on his heart.

IX

It happened—but O friend, if what I tell
Here or elsewhere concerning what befell
The prince Siddhártha, in thy seeming should
Not savour much of truth or likelihood ;
Cast not the book down ; rise not from thy seat
To other matters, deeming it unmeet
To pass an hour herewith ; read on and gain
No little profit with but little pain.

X

Say to thyself that in a loving mood,
And zealous for the honour of the Boodh,
Some ancient monk who heard hereof, gave heed
To write this record that all men might read,
And follow him whom he himself ador'd,
Even the great Incomparable Lord,
The guide to that fair city where is peace,
Whose matchless glory he would fain increase.

XI

And scorn him not from whom this record came ;
He may have erred, but thou hast done the same :
For whom thou honourest thou dost set on high ;
And whom thou lovest thou dost magnify.
He surely was not first, nor wilt thou be
The last to err from over-love : dost see
Thou art not better than thy kind or worse,
And they err not the most who err in verse.

XII

It happened then upon a certain day
That Gaútama would see his park that lay
East of the town, and went in princely state.
And as he drew anigh the eastern gate,
He lookt across the shoulders of the crowd
And saw far off a man whose back seemed bow'd
As one who toils beneath a weary load
Or stoops to search for somewhat in the road.

XIII

But when he lookt again right on before
He saw the man, and noted that he bore
None other burden saving that of years :
Right in their path he crept for his dull ears
Gave him no warning that men drew anigh
Till they were close upon him ; then a cry
Rose from his lips, and tremblingly he made
Towards the roadside, like a child afraid.

XIV

And surely now the men had not been slow
To thrust him on one side, yea and bestow
A curse upon the slowness of his feet,
That kept them biding in the growing heat,
And left him gasping his poor strength all spent ;
Had not the prince, perceiving their intent, ,
And taking pity on the old man, cried,
' Stay ye until the man has pass'd aside.'

XV

Whereat the runners grumbling, slack their pace.
Again the prince cried : ' Bide ye here a space,'
And rest you while I speak with this old man :
Now lead him hither, yea, and if ye can,
Be gentle, for I know your hands are rough :
Have not the gods afflicted him enough ?
The load is heavy ; add ye not thereto.'
So what he bade them they made haste to do.

XVI

Then painfully that ancient man drew near
To where the prince was, and like one in fear
He gazed around him with a troubled look.
Now as he stood before the prince he shook
For very eld and could in no wise stand
Upright or still ; but held within his hand
A staff to steady his uncertain gait,
And thereupon he leaned his weary weight.

XVII

His coarse and scant apparel failed to hide
His ghastly leanness ; for on either side
Each rib stood plainly out as in the dead
What time men perish for the lack of bread
And lie unburied in the public ways ;
And shrunken were the arms that in past days
Were strong to labour ; and the tight-drawn skin
About his joints show'd the white bones within.

XVIII

His eyes deep-sunk within his bowed bald head,
Seemed turned to water, while the lids were red
And rheumy. And his voice was thin and weak
And tremulous, and when he strove to speak
Across his toothless gums the weak sounds died
Ere men could catch them. High on either side
The cheek-bones rose ; and with its ghostly grin
The death's-head lookt out from the shrunken skin.

XIX

Now it may be that Gaútama had ne'er
Beheld his like ; because the king, aware
Of what he brooded on, had kept him well
From all such things as might too plainly tell
Of coming death, and of that hastening day,
When all a man's joys having passed away,
Even with the power to taste of them, he ends
By being a burden to himself and friends.

XX

And maybe, as he stood to gaze on such
Ripe wretchedness, he thought that he too much
Had drawn his knowledge of such things from books.
Howe'er it be, long time with wondering looks,
And like a man sore troubled and amazed,
Upon that uncouth, withered form he gazed ;
And seeing that he shook as if with fear,
Thus gently bade him be of better cheer :

XXI

‘ Fear not, old man : see here is gold whereby
Thou mayest get some pleasure ere thou die ;
And surely now thou hast not long to wait.
Who art thou, man ? for men might deem thee mate
To Death and Famine : but full well I wis
Some sore disease hath brought thee down to this,
For once thou stoodest straight amongst thy peers.
Say what may be the sum of all thy years ? ’

XXII

With childish awe he gazed upon the coins,
Then from the tattered cloth about his loins
He pluckt a rag ; and therein, fold on fold,
With nervous haste, he hid away his gold
That none might see it. Then he spake in tones
That trembled to the trembling of his bones ;
But needed some interpreter to teach
One half the matter of his broken speech.

XXIII

Then answered one of those who stood anear :
‘ O prince, he quakes from age and not from fear
Of thee or us : nay now his heart is light :
No plague hath dulled his ears or dimmed his sight :
No wasting sickness and no evil sore
Hath made of him the sight that men abhor ;
For looks he not as do the famisht dead ?
Yet well I know he does not lack for bread.

XXIV

' O prince, I lie not, tho' thou deem it strange
That years alone should bring about this change :
But this is what all travel to from birth ;
A sorry end, methinks, to all our mirth.
I would die earlier on the road, well-spiced
And well-attended.' Then Siddhártha said :
' Pass on who cares to, but to-day I lack
The heart for pleasure and will turn me back.'

XXV

Then heeding nought of sullen look or frown,
The prince rode slowly back towards the town,
Nor noted how his men were marvelling
At his behest, and that so small a thing
Should mar so much his lately joyous mood.
For pondering gloomily he nursed the brood
Of bitter thoughts that joyless Eld ere long
Should smite the glory of the fair and strong.

XXVI

' O once firm building fallen now to waste !
How are the carven capitals defaced !
The wings on either side are tottering now ;
Yea the strong pillars of the building bow ;
And all the lights thereof are waxen dim !
Yea,' said the prince, ' and like some withered limb,
That dead, still bides upon the parent tree
Tho' ripe for falling, even so is he.'

XXVII

Again it happen'd that in fair array
Young Gaútama upon a certain day
Went to his park, but by the southern road.
The sun, long risen o'er the hill-tops, show'd
That day was drawing to the sultry noon :
Wherefore they hasted thro' the town and soon
Passed thro' the gates, and felt their faces fann'd
By winds that savoured of the open land.

XXVIII

Folk stood to watch them, but they gave no heed
But hurried onward, and for greater speed
Each held his peace as mindful of the way
That lay before, and of the growing day.
Then suddenly, and in heart-riving tones,
A voice called out, and thereon followed groans
As of a sinner drawing nigh to death ;
Whereon Siddhártha, as the legend saith,

XXIX

Lookt from his chariot, and then beheld
A man laid by the wayside ; and impell'd
Thereto by pity, and desire to know
The cause of that exceeding bitter woe,
He bade them stay the car that he might see.
Then did he look upon such misery
And loathsomeness as made him think that mirth
And laughter should be banisht from the earth.

XXX

Before him stretcht upon the grass one lay
Whom wasting sickness had so worn away
That all the flesh from off his bones seemed gone :
Yet what was left thereof was fed upon
By loathsome parasites, and flies and scores
Of ulcerous wounds, and ever-running sores ;
From whence an odour that no man would dare
To linger in polluted all the air.

XXXI

Opprest with more than mortal pains and fears,
He groaned and cried so that men stopt their ears
For very horror. By wife, child, or friend,
He lay unholpen, drawing near his end ;
Afraid to die, and yet at point of death :
And never ceast, but as he failed for breath,
To pray the mighty gods to let him live,
Or cry for succour that no man could give.

XXXII

But when he cried for water, and none durst
Go near to give him what would slake his thirst,
Siddhártha ran unto his side and took
The empty jar, and filled it from the brook
That ran hard by, and set it near his head :
Then painfully the sick man turned and said,
'The gods reward thee, youth ! and for thy need
Leave thee not helpless in thy sorest need !'

XXXIII

Then set his hot lips to the jar and drank :
But Gaútama, made mindful of the rank
Unwholesome air, drew back to where his folk
Stood gazing on astonisht. Then outspoke
One man more thoughtful than the rest and said :
' Good were it for this man if he were dead !'
' Yea,' sneered his mate, ' a little earth would then
Hide all his foulness from the eyes of men.'

XXXIV

But one more worthy than the others turned
Towards the prince and said : ' Now have I learned
The utmost men can suffer and live on,
Yea cling to life tho' all its joys are gone.
Pain is the lot of all ; yet all I wis
Attain not such a cursèd end as this :
Yet who can say that soon we may not pine
In such a state, poor dying wretch, as thine ?'

XXXV

Then Gaútama sighed deeply, whereupon
The man again spake : ' Let us now begone,
Lest haply he should die before our eyes.
The sun grows hot ; and long ere morning dies
They look to greet thee at the garden gates.'
But as a child proposing to his mates
Some playful scheme, so now the man appeared
At this last speech. At length the prince upreared

XXXVI

His downcast head and answered him : ' I trow
It will be long before I care to go
To those fair gardens. Send ye one to say :
" Look not to see the prince's face to-day !"
Now palace-ward ! Yet note his beard and hair,
These prove him young, and once he too was fair
Perchance, and fashioned in a manly mould.
O evermore shall I that face behold !'

XXXVII

Another time, the prince in search of rest,
Rode to his park that lay towards the west ;
And passing thro' the gates beheld a crowd,
Wherefrom rose doleful voices wailing loud ;
Whereat he gazed and wondered much, for then
He knew but little of the ways of men ;
And calling to a man these words he spake :
' What means this tumult that the people make ?'

XXXVIII

Then soberly the man lookt up and said :
' Fair prince, they weep because a man is dead ;
And now they bear him to his grave hard by.
May it be long before thou come to die,
Because we know thou hast a kindly heart.'
Then presently the people drew apart,
And gazing thro' them, with a strange new fear,
He saw the dead man stretcht upon the bier.

XXXIX

And thro' the winding sheet his eyes could trace
 The ghastly outline of the still, set face ;
 The rigid arms, and cold unheaving breast ;
 And weary feet stretcht out in their last rest.
 And all the time the wailing rose and fell.
 Then said a servant whom the prince loved well :
 ' Behold the goal which all must reach one day,
 However long they tarry on the way.'

XL

' Shall I find pleasure now within the bowers
 Of the king's gardens ? nay, the very flowers
 Would smell of death, and every mound and cave
 Would mind me of the foul all-grasping grave.
 Nay,' cried the prince, ' turn back, for what have I
 To do with pleasure who perchance may die
 Before another sunrise, yea and be
 As dumb and stiff and still and cold as he ?'

XLI

And once again whenas the prince rode forth
 Towards the park that lay upon the north,
 A strange thing happed ; and thus it came to pass
 The prince's men were pushing thro' the mass
 Of busy folk, and as the press was great,
 They drew but slowly to the northern gate ;
 And Prince Siddhártha lookt out from between
 The parted curtains of his palankéen,

XLII

Or from his chariot ; and saw ere long
A grave ascetic passing thro' the throng.
Beneath his arm he bore a bowl, but had
None other burden ; and went meanly clad,
With sober countenance and eyes cast down.
No light fools-laughter, no unwholesome frown,
E'er marr'd the tranquil aspect of his face ;
Nor did he lift his eyes, nor slack his pace,

XLIII

To look on aught, or note what any said ;
Unheeded and unheeding, on he sped.
But ere he vanisht, Prince Siddhártha cried
Unto a servant walking at his side :
' Dost see that man ? methinks he knoweth peace.'
' Yea, prince,' he said, ' and may the gods increase
The same to him, and all who like him try
To fit themselves for death before they die.

XLIV

' Shall I now run and ask him to bestow
His blessing on thee ? for, prince, thou must know
That such men's prayers can ward away all ill.'
' Nay, vex him not,' he said ; ' but now my will
Is that ye bear me back, lest haply he
Who frowned on none should seem to frown on me
For seeking worldly pleasure. Turn ye round,
For now I know where true peace may be found.'

XLV

Now these are call'd 'The Four Drives,' and I read,
That ages afterwards, when this man's creed
Lackt not the help of kings to make it great,
Four goodly towers were built, one near each gate,
To mark the spots at which the prince turned back ;
And these abode for ages, but alack
Time, change, and man have wrought out their decay,
And now they have passed utterly away ;

XLVI

Like many other goodly piles of stone
Which men have built and time has overthrown ;
Yet countless eyes, now dark in death's eclipse,
Once joy'd to see them ; and long-silent lips,
That once were eloquent in praise of Boodh,
Were fain to kiss the ground on which they stood,
As, thro' long ages, countless pilgrim bands
Kept flocking thitherward from far-off lands :

XLVII

The subject of the Emperor of the Sun,
The pilgrim from bleak Tibet, and the Hun
From his far treeless plains, met there with those
Of Birmah, Siam, and the men now foes
Of their old faith ; Sumatrans, Javanese,
From palmy islands in the tropic seas—
All owned the blessèd bond of brotherhood
And bless'd the all-compassionating Boodh.

CANTO IV.

I

Now twelve long years went by, and what befell
The prince in these, it needs not long to tell ;
A few short verses will suffice to show
The matter fully. List ye, then, and know
That Gaútama still pondered as before
On life and death ; and still his heart grew sore
With brooding on the iron grasp of Fate
And all the miseries of man's estate.

II

And all this time the king ceast not to hope
By wise and careful management to stop
The progress of what still he held to be
A mental yet a dang'rous malady ;
Which left alone would further grow and spread
Thro' every part, until his son grew dead
To all the world, yea, and until he should
Be ripe for burial in some deep wood.

III

And therefore he surrounded him with all
That youth delights in, like as with a wall ;
Wine and fair women, feast, and friend, and sport ;
And all the splendours of an Eastern court ;
Yet often when he saw the prince's face
Flusht with the hot excitement of the chase,
Or merry o'er the wine-cup, he would sigh,
To think how all would presently pass by.

IV

For when the chase grew hottest, he would lag,
For fear the brown eyes of the dying stag
Should seem to chide him. He could not delight
To watch the falcón, or to see the tight
And straining leashes of the cheetah slip ;
Nor watch the wild beasts as they fought and gript
And rent each other ; tho' the well-pleased court
Lookt on and gloried in the cruel sport.

V

For howso pleasure moved him, at the best
It only brought some respite, not full rest,
Nor long cessation from foreboding fears :
A voice seemed ever whispering in his ears :
' Feast while thou mayest ; death is drawing nigh :
Sport while thou mayest ; age comes by and by :
Love while thou mayest ; Eld comes on apace :
Laugh while thou mayest ; pain shall change thy face.'

VI

This knowledge troubled him as those four words
Marred the Chaldean's mirth, as with his lords
And concubines he held high banqueting ;
Or like the sword, which the Sicilian king
Hung by a hair above his flatterer's head.
And often when a merry thing was said
The prince laught with the rest, yet those near by
Could hear his laughter ending in a sigh.

VII

' O,' sighed the prince, ' if but we could attain
Some happy state, and in that state remain,
Secure for evermore against the fear
Of Age and Death for ever drawing near ;
And safe for evermore from Change and Loss !
But now their baleful shadows fall across
Our sunniest paths, and leave us chill and dumb
With brooding over evil days to come.

VIII

' Alas for youth that it should turn ere long
To wither'd Eld ! thy rounded limbs and strong
Shall shake for very weakness ere thou die :
And Love herself shall coldly pass thee by ;
Her smiles are not for such as thou wilt be.
O cynical old age, who loveth thee ?
Thou carest not for beauty or for truth :
Thou sneerest at the ardent hopes of youth

IX

‘ As one who lies at rest upon his bed
Dreams he beholds some form of direst dread
Rush on to seize him ; yet in that same hour,
Tho’ melting with his terror, has no power
To flee or move ; so faint with fear I lie
While rapidly the evil day draws nigh ;
So, powerless to move, I sit and wait
The falling of the dreaded stroke of Fate.

X

‘ O that some kindly sage would teach me truth !
O that my sighs might move the gods to ruth !
Perchance they listen not to our poor prayers,
For it may be that we and our affairs
Are too contemptible for their regard :
Perchance our prayers are weak, or those who guard
The heavenly portals will not let them in
For being mixt with selfishness and sin.

XI

‘ If death were only what it seems to be,
And this were all of life that we should see,
No longer in repining would I waste
The precious hours ; but I would cry make haste
To take thy fill of pleasure ere thou die ;
And when love, youth, and health had all gone by,
And life grew weary, I would end my days
With some sweet poison and thus go my ways,

XII

‘ And sleep an endless sleep : but now they say
Death is no end to our existence ; nay,
It is but as the door wherethro’ we pass
To other forms of being ; and alas !
To other forms of sorrow and unrest.
Herein the wisdom of the wise at best
Is little worth, for none of them can show
Wherefrom we come or whereunto we go.

XIII

‘ Yet sometimes I have heard the wicked say
When one reproved them : “ Let us have our day :
We shall be soon as tho’ we ne’er had been.
What matter if we be not overclean ?
We are but dust ; and good and bad, all tend
Unto one certain and one common end,
Wherefrom no goodness will avail to save.
Look ye for recompense within the grave ? ”

XIV

‘ But if I thought thus, could I be content
To live as they do ? Nay ; and I repent
Of my late selfish thought ; but I would cry
In all men’s ears : “ O friends, fear not to die ;
Fear only what is worthy of your fear,
And that not overmuch ; for death draws near,
And that shall give you rest ; for from that sleep
None ever shall awake to toil or weep.” ’

XV

It was the prince's habit in those days
To seek out such men as had gotten praise
For piety or wisdom, or who knew,
As men reported, what was known to few,
And ask them questions ; but he was not slow
To find they knew not what he sought to know :
Beneath the multitude of words he spied
The ignorance they vainly sought to hide.

XVI

So from them all he got but little good.
So hiding his contempt as best he could,
He gave them presents and they went their way.
Yet as they left the presence one would say,
With smother'd anger : ' This young prince would seem
To hold the people's creed in light esteem :
Had he but been a meaner man, I trow
He had not askt, nor had I answered so.'

XVII

Another muttered angrily : ' This youth
Bade show if I knew anything of truth,
And deemed my wisdom of a doubtful kind ;
I might have said, " I am not quite so blind
As thou dost think me, for I plainly 'see
That if not now, thou very soon wilt be
A heretic and of the vilest sort."
Ah me, I lose my courage when at court.'

XVIII

But there were some more modest than the rest,
Who, when they learned the prince's grief, confest
They knew not ; neither knew they one that did.
They said : ' O gracious prince, these things are hid
From us and all men, and we cannot tell ;
Nor canst thou hope to, tho' thou ponder well :
These things are wrapt in mystery and doubt
So that the wisest may not find them out.

XIX

' But this we know, that as our fathers taught
So teach we now, and few but thee have sought
For confirmation of the common creed :
But thou are not of those who say, " What need
Is there of proving what so few deny ?
We shall know all about it by and by ;
For death will make us wise, let be till then."
Such is the manner of the most of men.'

XX

Thus twelve years passed and he had grown to be
A grave and sober man, and verily
A man that men would turn to look upon,
And long remember, after they had gone
About their ways, and mixt with common folk ;
For there was that within his face which spoke
Of some great trouble resting on his mind—
Some sorrow of no ordinary kind.

XXI

And now the prince, who had long time revolved
The matter in his mind, at last resolved
To turn ascetic ; for he mused and said :
‘ If I sit here I shall be old or dead
Before I have attained to my desire ;
For truly now I seem but little nigher
Unto that end than when I first began
To ponder on the destiny of man.

XXII

‘ What I have sought for I have not found out :
I wander on bewildered and in doubt,
With none to lead me by the hand. Mayhap
It is because I linger in the lap
Of full-fed luxury ; and from my youth
I have not lackt for pleasures, yet in sooth
The gods know well I seldom valued such
Above their worth, or sought them overmuch.

XXIII

‘ But Peace likes not the stir and heat and noise
Of carnal pleasures ; nor the stormy joys
That shake the building to its very base,
Nor all the hollow fashion and grimace
And pomp of palaces, or such like things,
And seldom tarries in the homes of kings ;
Nor in man’s breast will she consent to share
Divided empire with unquiet Care.

XXIV

‘ I will away, lest while I linger here,
That come upon me which I so much fear.
It may be that when I have laid aside
All fleshly pleasures, and the pomp and pride
Of princely state, fair Peace will make a nest
And lasting dwelling-place within my breast ;
For I will say, “ O thou divine one, see
What I have parted with to purchase thee.

XXV

“ O enter, for the noisy guests are gone :
The throne is set, O sit thou thereupon,
And reign as queen ; for those whom thou dost let,
And none beside shall enter here, or set
Their feet upon the threshold of the door.”
And she will enter and depart no more ;
And patiently and well I will work out
The problems that have filled my soul with doubt

XXVI

‘ I will seek truth in all the world around ;
And find her too, if that she may be found :
For I will track her with unfaltering pace,
Till I behold the fashion of her face.
And if she wear an evil look and be
An enemy to man, then woe is me
At such a bitter ending of my quest !
Then I must bear my portion with the rest.

XXVII

‘ But if she wear a gracious look, and prove
To be in all things worthy of man’s love ;
My heart shall leap for joy, for I shall then
Have found salvation for the sons of men :
I will go forth and show what I have seen ;
Not hide my gospel from the poor and mean,
Nor keep it back to please the vile and great,
Nor sell it to the men of high estate.’

XXVIII

Anon he sought the princess and made known
His resolution ; and to her alone
Did he tell plainly all that he had plann’d.
He said : ‘ O wife, the time is near at hand
When I must leave thee, and go forth to seek
That whereof thou hast often heard me speak.
Now do not thou begin to weep lest I
Feel all my courage for this quest go by.

XXIX

‘ For now, O princess, thou and I must part,
And it may be for ever, for my heart
Tells me I go upon no easy quest :
Yet this one hope, a solitary guest,
Abides with me now all the rest are fled.
How many hopes before my eyes have spread
A banquet of fair promises and bade
Me eat thereof and be no longer sad !

XXX

‘ But I grew lean upon such empty food ;
And bitterly I cried, “ It is not good
That man should live on words however sweet
Or fair they be ; have ye none other meat ?
For I have eaten of this food, until
I weary of it, yet I hunger still.”
And when I saw in truth that they had none,
I sent them sternly from me one by one.

XXXI

‘ I had gone long ere this, but that I feared
To grieve thee overmuch. Thou hast endeared
Thyself to me more than my lips can tell,
And never hast thou ceast to please me well.
For thy sake only have I long delay’d
What I have purposed, for I was afraid
Of thy sad pleadings, yet I often meant
To tell thee presently of mine intent.

XXXII

‘ And yet indeed I had not much to show :
Thou knewest of my purpose long ago :
And therefore thou art in some wise prepared.
Thou thoughtest that the kind gods would have spared
Thee this great sorrow ? nay, it may not be,
For what is written in man’s destiny
Must surely be accomplit soon or late :
The very gods themselves must bow to fate.

XXXIII

‘ O fond and foolish woman, stay thy voice
 From this wild weeping : rather now rejoice
 That I am parting from thee whole and strong,
 With all my life within me ; but ere long
 If I stayed here, as death comes on apace,
 Thou mightest see me die before thy face,
 Smit by some sudden stroke, or long time bide
 In pining sickness till at last I died,

XXXIV

‘ And left behind a loathsome carcase, such
 As birds of carrion might scorn to touch.
 But if I died not thus, but lived on still
 For many years ; why should I tarry till
 Old age had turned our love to scorn and spite ?
 When thinking, “ Did I ever take delight
 In such as thee,” we should snarl each at each
 With hateful glances and reproachful speech.

XXXV

‘ Far better that we part, now, while our eyes
 See beauty in each other ; or love dies
 Smit by the cruel strokes of Eld or Death.
 O Life ! O Love ! what are ye but a breath !
 A lightning flash that flameth and is gone
 Ere one can turn himself to gaze thereon !
 And yet, Yasódhará, I am right loth
 To speak that word which shall so grieve us both.

XXXVI

But how she answered him, and what she said,
Shall not be told by me, for now I tread
On holy ground. Some griefs are best untold ;
And as men hide their dead beneath the mould,
So shall her grief be hidden from all eyes,
Lest some beholding should perchance despise.
Sore was her grief, but yet of no avail ;
She shall not suffer by an ill-told tale

XXXVII

Now when his father knew of his intent,
As one who has long striven to prevent
Some evil thing, yet sees it come at last,
Despite his efforts ; so he felt, and cast
Himself down listlessly, and sighing sore,
Fixt his dim eyes upon the marble floor.
Anon into his heart began to creep
A bitterness too great to let him weep.

XXXVIII

And murmuring, 'What I have long time feared
Has come upon me now at last,' upreared
His downcast head, and gazing on the prince,
Cried : 'All the labour I have taken since
Thine early childhood, now has come to nought.
Long time have I foreseen this, yet I thought
If I might not prevent, I might delay
And put it off until a later day.

XXXIX

‘ But now thou art impatient to be gone.
This is a foolish quest thou goest on,
And little profit wilt thou find therein :
Thou wilt lose more than ever thou canst win.
Methinks thou art too lavish in the price
Thou payest for thy knowledge : O think thrice
Before thou layest all the barter down,
“ Is what I purchase worth a monarch’s crown ? ”

XL

‘ Alas, my son, how shall I give thee up ?
My words are bitter truly, for my cup
Is filled with bitterness unto the brim ;
And as I drink thereof my hopes wax dim.
I thought thou wouldest stay to close mine eyes.’
Thus he continued, trusting that his sighs
And bitter words might move him to relent,
Yet could in no wise alter his intent.

XLI

Now all the time the prince with downcast head
Stood listening to what his father said,
And inwardly he groaned to see his grief.
At last they parted. ‘ Like some startled thief,’
The king thought, ‘ he will fly on some dark night.
Nay, by the gods, he shall not thus take flight :
Sharp eyes shall watch him : I will surely set
Guards at the gates : hope is not perisht yet.’

XLII

Now when as old save by one year as He
Who ages after taught in Galilee ;
That Teacher mighty thro' all coming days ;
Whose words have been as earthquakes, and whose ways
Were from of old, before the world began ;
Ere living creature moved therein, or man
Sprang from that dust which he must till for bread,
Until he hide therein his guilty head ;

XLIII

When just as old save by one year, as He,
Siddhártha yielding to strong destiny
(Which wise men tell us with a sigh, ' alas,
With or without our wills, must come to pass'—
Perchance they err), upon a certain day,
That he might better lead men's minds astray
And lull suspicion (for they never ceast
To watch him closely), made a mighty feast ;

XLIV

And thereat sat and feasted with his peers
For the last time thro' all the many years
That he should thenceforth live ; for men forgot
The hidden danger ; feasting, they dreamed not
Of Gaútama's resolve : one man alone
Knew of his purpose and how it had grown
To ripeness ; and he waited thro' the night
With two swift horses ready trapt for flight.

XLV

Now as they feasted, word was brought by one
That Supra's daughter had brought forth a son,
Whereat was great rejoicing in that place.
But joy and sorrow in the prince's face
Strove for the mastery as he said, ' I see
A love-begetting thing is born to me—
A thing to love,' then thought, ' O child, that art
Already loved, before the dawn we part !'

XLVI

But triumph beamed in king Sudhódan's eye
(Poor king, thy triumph will too soon pass by) ;
' This late-forged chain,' he thought, ' will hold him fast
If all beside gives way ; and now at last
I may know peace. The gods be thank't for this ;
I have forgotten them too long : I miss
Much good perchance thereby : half unawares
Have I received this answer to my prayers.'

XLVII

Poor king, thou errest ! yet not more than those
Who cry to God for what are but deep woes,
Although, poor blinded ones, they know it not ;
Or those who, seeking for an altered lot,
Think that an answer to their prayers is sent,
When they get somewhat which is only meant
For their confusion, seeing it is meet.
At last each well-filled guest rose from his seat,

XLVIII

And all sought for their chambers, and the halls
Grew chill and empty ; and the last footfalls
Died into silence : and Sudhódan thought
'What need is there to watch him now ?' and sought
And found deep slumber. But the prince bode still
Within his chamber, listening until
The lagging servants should have gone their ways, .
For now he feared them and their prying gaze.

XLIX

At last unbroken silence reigned throughout.
Then with a cloak he girt himself about,
And looking cautiously around, he crept
Into the chamber where the princess slept,
Her child beside her. On each tranquil face
He cast a glance, then hurried from the place.
Then did the dark night feel a heart's wild throbs,
And cold walls listen unto stifled sobs.

L

Ghostlike, he stole across the empty rooms
Late loud with revel, but now chill as tombs,
And silent as the ever-voiceless grave.
All slept that should have barred his pathway, save
One man, whom sorrow maybe stayed from sleep ;
Or it may be he had not drunk so deep
As had his comrades of the festal wine.
He saw him passing in the pale moonshine,

LI

And reacht to wake his fellows in that place ;
But suddenly the prince turned round, his face
Marred by deep sorrow, and lookt sadly back ;
Then toucht with pity his raised arm fell slack
Against his side, and so the prince passed on,
And soon had vanisht ; and when he had gone,
The man began to murmur, ‘ Go thy way,
And be thou far from hence at break of day.

LII

Let who will hinder thee, but for my part
I had far liefer help thee, for my heart
Is moved with pity for thee ; and this thing
May be of fate, and meddling I might bring
Some trouble on me. He who strives with fate
Is always worsted. I am no ingrate.
I do remember me of his kind ways,
And how he dealt with all men in past days.

LIII

And it would be a scurvy recompense
If I should hinder his departure hence :
Yea he that does so let him be accurst !
I will turn round and sleep, for at the worst
I shall but fare to-morrow as the rest.
God speed thee, kindly prince, upon thy quest !’
With that he turned upon his side and slept.
Now still upon his way the prince had kept ;

LIV

And presently he came to where his groom
Stood waiting with those horses: thro' the gloom
These neighed him welcome as his tread they heard ;
Then quickly mounting, without any word,
Each a deep breastful of the cool air drank ;
And smiting each his horse upon the flank,
Out into the weird night the fresh steeds sprang,
The dry hard road beneath their hoof-beats rang.

LV

The startled night birds hush't their wailful notes ;
The rising howl died in the ravenous throats
Of prowling beasts of prey ; and fearing scath,
The reptile hasted from their dang'rous path ;
The hoarse frog croaking in the wayside pond
Lookt out and listened, then dived down beyond
The fear and tumult of their horses' hoofs ;
But they rode on until the sky gave proofs

LVI

That dawn drew near to glad the world once more,
Yet on they prest. At last they stood before
A mighty forest ; then Siddhártha cried :
' Now halt we, for we need no farther ride :
Here I am safe.' Then lighting down he shook
The night dew from his locks, and cast a look
Towards Kapilavast now far away
And dim with distance and the twilight gray.

LVII

Then putting off such robes as might have told
 Of his high rank, these with his gems and gold,
 And jewelled belt, to him who held the reins
 He gave and said, 'Have these things for thy pains,
 For no more shall I need such toys as these.'
 'Then sighed he as the wind sighed thro' the trees,
 But not from grief or fear lest he should rue
 What he had done or was about to do.

LVIII

Then crying to his sword, 'O deathful blade,
 Yet this once only will I seek thine aid,'
 He sheared away his long black locks, the sign
 Of his high caste, crying: 'Thus I resign
 The worldling's hopes, and cut myself apart
 From his enjoyments: henceforth shall my heart
 Be filled with other matters, and my days
 Shall pass by occupied in other ways.'

LIX

(Now never after did Siddhártha wear
 Such long loose locks; but soon the shorten'd hair
 Turned upward in short twisted curls. This is
 The reason why in all his images
 They represent him with a curly head:
 The which beholding once, our wise men said,
 And thought, 'Verily and beyond a doubt
 From Ethiopia this man came out.')

LX

‘Bear witness thou to this that I have done,
And tell it all men. Ah and dost thou run
To rob the winds of their poor worthless prey?
Now get thee gone! and if upon the way
Thou meetest such as may perchance pursue,
Say, “’Tis a vain thing that ye seek to do;
Behold these locks! why ride ye then so fast
To take a sinner that hath broken caste?’

LXI

“‘He hath bid farewell to the ways of men.”
But if thou meetest not with any, when
Thou comest to the palace thou shalt say:
“The prince my master at the break of day
Bade me say this: ‘Let no one fear for me;
I am what I have long resolved to be—
A poor ascetic: lay it not to heart,
Nor be offended that I thus depart.’”

LXII

Now as the sun rose making all things gay,
Siddhártha moved to go upon his way;
Yet still that man stood, loth to go; his head
Bent down to hide his grief. Then spake and said
The kindly prince: ‘Why dost thou tarry here?
Beware the noon-day sun. Have thou no fear
To face my father; for when thou shalt tell
My message, doubt not that all will be well.’

LXIII

Whereto he answered : ‘ Kind lord, I fear not
Thy father’s anger, be it ne’er so hot ;
I grieve because I shall not see thee more.
O let me follow thee !’ Then weeping sore
He hid away his face in his two hands :
But when once more the prince’s soft commands
Fell on his ears, he turned him to obey ;
And so they parted, going each his way.

CANTO V.

I

WHAT man is this, that in the sultry heat,
The dust of travel still upon his feet,
Athirst and weary, draws anear the gate
Of Vaisali? his unattended state
Proves him no denizen of rich men's halls;
Yet they who dwell within mud-plastered walls
Wear coarser raiment, and are seldom seen
With such a noble countenance and mien.

II

This is the man whom all men heretofore
Have known as prince Siddhártha ; but no more
By that proud title shall he now be known.
The son of ancient kings, he walks alone,
Athirst and hot and weary, with no man
To make a shadow over him, or fan
Delicious coolness into his hot frame :
Let Sakya-muni henceforth be his name.

III

There lived in Vaisali in those old days
A very learnèd Brahman, whose loud praise
Was on all tongues. From all the country round
Men flockt to hear a teacher so profound.
Three hundred rapt disciples called him lord,
And sitting at his feet, with one accord
Deemed him a teacher sent from God, and one
Envied by many but excelled by none.

IV

Now Sakya-muni long ago had heard
Of this great Brahman ; and his heart was stirr'd
Within him as he noted his great fame.
And now, a pious mendicant he came
To pray the sage to grant that he might sit
Among his followers, if he thought fit
Of his free favour to accord this grace :
No matter if he filled the lowest place.

V

So presently he passed the gates, and found
Himself within the city, and lookt round
As if uncertain whither next to go.
Then said he to a man : ‘ I pray thee show
Where he doth dwell of whom the people say,
“ He is the shower of the happy way ;
He is the fount of wisdom ; in the night
Of ignorance and error he gives light.”

VI

‘For I have come from far to learn if what
Men say concerning him be true or not.’
Whereto he answered : ‘He whom thou hast named
Lives but a bowshot hence. But thou art lamed
By thy long journey ; rest awhile thy head
Beneath my roof, for thou art sore bestead ;
Thy blistered face shows plainly thou art one
Not well accustomed to the scorching sun.

VII

‘Come, wash away the dust from off thy feet :
I will set bread before thee ; thou shalt eat ;
And on the morrow thou shalt go thy way,
But leave thy blessing.’ So he made him stay
Until the morning. All that he had on
When first he entered, when he left was gone ;
And coarse and scanty and devoid of grace,
The mendicant’s mean garb supplied its place.

VIII

For he had said unto his host : ‘If thou
Wilt add unto thy favours and unto
My gratitude, go sell these robes and buy
The rough robe of a mendicant ; for I
Will wear such only Henceforth.’ So he went
And did his bidding. Now the robes, tho’ rent
And reft of ornaments, brought far more than
Sufficed the needs of the now lowly man.

IX

Next day the Brahman, as his custom was,
 Spake to the people ; and it came to pass
 That glancing round about him, he ere long
 Caught sight of a fresh face amid the throng.
 Now this was no new thing ; for by his fame
 Attracted hither constantly men came
 To hear his wisdom ; still the sage began
 To marvel as he gazed upon this man.

X

He marked his noble bearing and he thought :
 ‘ He is some rajah, who perchance has wrought
 Some grievous crime whereof he doth repent ;
 And now to save his soul he is content
 To turn ascetic : yet he does not cease
 To mourn his guilt ; and seemeth far from peace.
 Great was his crime to bring such great remorse.’
 So after he had ended his discourse,

XI

He spake with him and said : ‘ Thou seemest one
 Who hath but very recently begun
 This course of life. What wert thou heretofore ?
 And what is it that makes thy heart so sore ?
 Fear not to tell me all thy hidden grief ;
 It may be I may bring thee some relief :
 The gods perchance have sent thee here that I
 May be the healer of thy malady.’

XII

Then Sakya-muni answered : ' Thy kind words
Are like to harmonies drawn from the chords
Of some sweet lyre. Now of my former state
Know thou this much : once I was rich and great
And well beloved by my friends and kin :
I lived in pleasure, but I found therein
No lasting happiness or solid peace,
But rather sorrow that would still increase.

XIII

' Yet I had done no impious thing that I
Should fear the dreadful vengeance of the sky :
And know thou this, that from my early youth
I have been one of those who seek for truth ;
And one of those, alas, who find it not
Tho' they seek carefully ; and now for what
Have I turned mendicant, except it be
To find this treasure in such men as thee ?

XIV

' They say that thou art very wise : thy speech
Proclaims that thou art kind : I pray thee teach
Me what thou knowest ; yea, let me be one
Of thy disciples.' He replied : ' My son,
Be not so utterly cast down ; this boon
I grant thee readily : fear not, for soon
Thou shalt find peace : I never lead astray,
But guide men wholly in a perfect way.'

XV

So Sakya-muni from that hour was known
As his disciple. Not in name alone
Had he turned mendicant : what charity
(How poor and scant soe'er the gift might be)
Gave, he took unrepiningly and blest
The hand that gave it ; and went meanly drest
In coarsest robes wherethro' the heats of day
And chills of midnight found a ready way.

XVI

For every morning in his hands he bore
An alms-bowl, and went round from door to door,
And stood until the folk within should give
Enough of food to keep his soul alive
Until the morrow, when he came again.
Not often did he look for alms in vain,
Or with a scanty portion roam forlorn,
And fast and famish till the morrow morn.

XVII

For often would his well-filled bowl attest
The people's charity. Tho' meanly drest,
His coarse apparel could not well efface
The manly bearing, and the quiet grace
Of form and feature ; and the folk would stand
To gaze upon him, as with bowl in hand
He came for alms, or passed along the street,
Or sought a shadow from the broiling heat.

XVIII

But few men questioned him ; yet noting oft
How straight his form was, and how small and soft
His hands were, they would say : ‘ He seems to be
More like some nobleman of high degree
Than an ascetic though he wears the yoke :
He ne’er was one of us poor common folk :
He seems to be a stranger in our town,
And lately come : poor man, he seems cast down.

XIX

‘ Mayhap some crime done in a former state
Is being visited upon him : late
Or early all our sins will find us out.’
There was no little gossiping about
The new ascetic : people of all grades
Would ask concerning him. Dark Indian maids
Gazed on him wonderingly, and lordlings’ eyes
Would open on him with a strange surprise.

XX

A poor man now, he lived among the poor
And felt as one of them ; and learnt, be sure,
What wealth too often hinders or destroys—
A sympathy with their poor griefs and joys—
A tenderness for their mean hopes and fears.
And this he ne’er forgot : in after years
He was the poor man’s friend, and this thing proved
One reason wherefore he was so beloved.

XXI

And thus he learnt some things that until then
He had not known so well ; that needy men
May be more gen'rous than the lords of lands :
That liberal hearts have often empty hands :
That oft the poor man's gift is worth far more
Than what is given from the rich man's store :
And that the poor display a kindness which
Is little known among the great and rich.

XXII

He knew that there was sorrow in the earth,
Had long time known it, and had mourned the dearth
Of hope and comfort ; yet with new surprise
He now beheld it with his very eyes,
And found it greater than he erst had thought.
It was a bitter knowledge, and it brought
A deeper sorrow, as he lookt in vain
To find some healing for man's grief and pain.

XXIII

Death and the sorrows that lead thereunto
Became familiar sights, yet often drew
Deep groanings from him as he gazed thereon.
The misery on which the bright sun shone
Was now no longer hidden from his eyes,
And tears would fill them as he heard the cries
Of some lone mother, or of some young wife
Now made a widow to the end of life.

XXIV

Can grief be fair? yet some men can rehearse
Their deepest sorrows in melodious verse,
Till one might almost envy them their grief ;
But such are few, for most must find relief
In wordless weeping, yea and even hide
Their bitter sorrows out of fear or pride
Lest their poor sobbings and their sighs and tears
Offend unsympathetic eyes and ears.

XXV

He would sit often raising not his eye
To see who gazed at him or passed him by,
While his free thought went out beyond the bars
Of time and sense, and soared among the stars,
Or dived into the hidden deeps below,
Or went like lightning, flashing to and fro,
Or peered into the blank of death, or strained
To grasp the Unknown and the Unattained.

XXVI

In vain he sought the starting point and goal—
The whence and whither of the human soul :
In vain he strove to pierce the clouded night
Where God is hidden ; for tho' He be light,
In thickest clouds He wraps Himself about,
And man by searching cannot find Him out.
The journeying stars were silent overhead,
And silent still lay the unconscious dead.

XXVII

But not alone in sitting thus apart,
And parleying with his own mind and heart,
Did he seek truth ; where raged the war of words,
And arguments flew out like deathful swords,
He hung not back ; but oftentimes would rush
Into the thickest of the fight and push
Men on to strife, regardless of all scath,
That he might prove the groundwork of their faith.

XXVIII

And often his cool reasoning convinced
The men who heard him ; smooth-tongued sophists winced
At his close arguments ; the pedant felt
The weak foundations of his folly melt ;
The fool for once grew silent. Whoso cared
To know his creed, found him not unprepared
To state it and to prove it, tho' in sooth
There was but little that he held for truth.

XXIX

And that wise pundit more than once forgot
His wonted calm and frowned, yea and waxt hot
At his close questioning ; and when his place
Was empty, as was oftentimes the case,
He smiled and murmured, ' Good, he is not here ;
Now from these others I have nought to fear,
For none of them will question what I say.
'Tis well for all that he should keep away.'

XXX

For unlike many, Sakya-muni weighed
The pundit's reasoning, and was not afraid,
Nor did he deem it impious, to doubt
The brahman's doctrines : so he soon found out
The measure of his wisdom ; and discerned
Where lay his weakness : thus he soon had learned
All he could teach him. Then did he prepare
To seek for wisdom and for truth elsewhere.

CANTO VI.

I

ONE day he listened while a traveller show'd
How that in Rajagaha there abode
A brahman of deep wisdom and wide fame ;
Seven hundred men were proud to bear the name
Of his disciples ; and the man was wise
In solving doubts and reading mysteries.
' Good ! ' thought he, and was far upon his way
To Rajagaha ere the close of day.

II

And day and night he journey'd on, until
He reacht the city ; from a neighbouring hill
He first set eyes upon the royal town.
But ere he reacht the gates the sun went down
In crimson splendours, and the dusk began
To tinge all things in its weird light. Then ran
From mouth to mouth the gossip, as at last
Thro' Rajagaha the late traveller past.

III

Now at this hour of coolness and of calm
Three men were seated underneath a palm
That spread its graceful fronds beside the street
Where down Siddhártha passed with weary feet,
Unmindful of all gazers. Here they sat,
Their daily labours ended; and for that
The hour was cool they lingered still and told
Strange tales and legends of the days of old.

IV

They told how gods had left their native skies,
To roam the earth awhile in human guise;
And how fierce demons from the hells beneath
The blooming earth would issue, bringing death
And dire affliction to the wretched race
Of mortal men; and afterwards retrace
Their footsteps, and flit back to hell's red night
To lash the wicked with unwonted spite.

V

They told how oftentimes the air was full
Of thronging spirits—of the ghastly ghoul,
That lurks in graveyards, feasting on the dead;
Of bodies out of which the souls had fled,
But which still lived inhabited by some
Deceiving spirit—till the very hum
Of insects overhead awoke their fears,
It seemed like spirits buzzing round their ears.

VI

Now Sakya-muni, passing down the street,
Saw these men sitting thus, and turned his feet
And went towards them, thinking, ' These will spare
Me further journey.' But all unaware
That one drew near them, they talkt on till when
The stranger fronted them and cried : ' O men
That sit here at your ease ! I pray you tell
Where may the Lord of Wisdom chance to dwell ?'

VII

Then, suddenly, they all lookt up ; with awe,
There standing in the growing dusk they saw
A man of kingly countenance and mien ;
A nobler form they never yet had seen,
Tho' King Bimsára, whom some called ' The Great,'
Abode within their town, and oft in state
Rode forth with all his lords of high degree ;
And no mean man to look upon was he.

VIII

Now in their dumb astonishment they sat ;
And staring on him open-mouthed, forgot
His question, and the answer they should give ;
For each one thought, ' As truly as I live
Thou art ascetic but in garb alone !'
The abject bearing and the whining tone
Were wholly wanting ; and they could not trace
Aught of such fellowship in that grand face.

IX

Then Sakya-muni, seeing that they gave
No answer to his civil question, save
Wild looks and gapings ; with a countenance
And voice unmarred by anger said : ‘ Perchance,
O friends, ye heard me not ; and it may be
The fault was mine for speaking doubtfully ;
But I would learn where that great sage doth dwell
Of whose deep wisdom all the world speaks well.’

X

Then in confusion, one man stammered out
A wrong direction ; so he turned about,
And went his way. And after he had gone
Beyond their utmost vision, outspake one,
And said : ‘ Why sit we here like fools ? our eyes
Have lookt upon a god in hermit’s guise !
Vishnu or Siva have indeed come down.
Away ! and let us tell it to the town !’

XI

The second said : ‘ Yea verily he seemed
A god indeed : now three times have I dreamed
A god spake with me : it hath come to pass.’
The third man thought that at the least he was
Some mighty lord ; ‘ And he is come,’ said he,
‘ To see our far-famed sage, but privily,
For shame of ignorance, or rather lest
His greatness trouble that great sage’s breast.’

XII

Then cried the first : ' Friends ! I now mind me what
One told me years ago ; I had forgot
The matter till this moment ; but he said
In solemn tones (a blessing on his head,
And may the kind gods grant him peace and health !)
That I should shortly come unto great wealth
By meeting of a stranger. Friends, look you,
The fakeer's words at last are coming true.'

XIII

The second answered : ' Truly now this thing
Is wonderful, so let us to the king,
And tell him of it, for he will accord
Us ready hearing, and a due reward.
But let us haste, lest some one tell the tale
While we sit idling here, and so we fail
Of our reward.' Thereto they all agreed,
And gat them to the palace with all speed ;

XIV

And told the monarch ; adding : ' Great king, send
And bring this man : perchance the gods intend
Some special honour for our land and town :
Perchance it is a god that hath come down
To bring some message : therefore send and see ;
And when it comes to pass, remember we
Were first to tell thee of this wondrous thing.'
' If one man only,' said the dreaded king,

XV

‘ Had told this tale of yours, I should have sai !
“ Begone fool ! and be thankful that thy head
Is still upon thy shoulders ! sooth, it seems
That I must listen to the stupid dreams
Of drunkards !” But ye are not one but three :
Your testimony also doth agree ;
Perchance ye planned it should before ye came ;
If so, beware ! my vengeance is not lame.

XVI

‘ Now go ! and on the morrow I will test
The truth of these your words, and if ye jest,
Yon sword-blade, notcht on necks of greater worth,
May bring about an ending of your mirth.
Be here again to-morrow.’ At that word
Each cast a glance towards the fateful sword,
And quaking at the king’s terrific frown
Went forth to spread the tidings through the town.

XVII

‘ Some god forsooth ! ah, I should like to see
A greater than myself, if such there be.’
So thought Bimsára, as he turned and gave
A short commandment to a kneeling slave
To lead the stranger thither on the morn.
That night Siddhártha, wearied and outworn,
Beneath some sheltering palm-trees laid him down
And slept, unmindful of the startled town.

XVIII

Right early on the morn Bimsára's men
Came seeking for the mendicant ; and when
They saw one sleeping underneath a tree,
They whispered to each other, ' This is he.'
' Yea,' said one fellow, ' and I will be sworn—
No fear of perjury—that he was born
And nourisht in a palace ; ne'ertheless
We will awake him, or we shall transgress

XIX

' The king's commandment ; for he bade us look
To bring the stranger early.' So they shook
The sleeper gently, till at last they broke
The wizard spell of dreams, and he awoke ;
But not as one, who, sleeping knows his guilt,
And being wakened clutches at the hilt
Of his hid weapon, but in peaceful wise,
And sitting up he rubbed his drowsy eyes.

XX

Then said they courteously : ' Great sir, the king
Would see thy face, and we are sent to bring
Thee to his presence. Be thou not afraid ;
He will not harm thee ;' for he lookt dismay'd,
But only that he still must know such things
As gilded palaces and slave-girt kings.
But he arose and went with them, and drew
Unto the palace, and pass'd thereinto ;

XXI

And went past staring menials, and thro' rooms
Deckt in fair hangings wrought by Indian looms
And gorgeous with glaring paint and gold,
And costly furniture of price untold,
And carvings, all the work of cunning hands,
And curious treasures brought from far-off lands,
And trophies won in war, and fair things which
Fall only to the portion of the rich.

XXII

At length he stood before the king, but not
As one of low degree—glued to the spot
By clownish awkwardness or servile fear—
With calm and graceful bearing he drew near
The mighty king, and looked him in the face
As one who felt not wholly out of place,
Nor wholly unaccustomed to such things
As courtly splendours and the sight of kings.

XXIII

All this Bimsára noted at a glance,
And thought : ' A goodly fellow, and perchance
Some lord disguised, and by his face no fool,
Nor crafty plotter 'gainst my life or rule.'
Then cried he, ' Man ! who art thou ? thy mean dress
Proclaims thee an ascetic, ne'ertheless
I deem thee other, for thy mien belies
Thy poor apparel. 'Tis a thin disguise

XXIV

‘Wherein thou goest ! Art thou not some lord
Bent on some secret errand ? Pray accord
Me share in this thy secret, and when shown,
I swear to thee I will not make it known ;
Except, indeed, it be to mine own hurt :
But this I fear not. I am all alert
To hear thy story : I will not betray
Thy purpose, but may speed thee on thy way.’

XXV

‘O gracious monarch, what thine eyes now see
That am I and none other,’ answered he ;
‘But as thou doubtest, I will now relate
Wherefore thou seest me in this mean state.’
Thereon he told him all ; and when he east,
Bimsára spake and said : ‘Well, prince, at least
About thy rank I err’d not, for the rest
I was in error, as thy words attest.

XXVI

‘Now, prince—for I will call thee by that name—
When I was younger I thought much the same
As thou now thinkest ; yea, I sought for light,
But found all things were wrapt in blackest night ;
So I grew weary of the search, and when
I got no help from either gods or men,
I turned, and set my heart on other things ;
And now I am the greatest of all kings,

XXVII

‘Or so men say. Thou mayest fare somewhat
The same, if thou do likewise ; and if not,
Thy life may still be pleasant : thou hast wealth
And rank and friends and goodliness and health.
Bethink thee, men are happy on far less
Of this world’s good : but if thou have success,
And light on truth, which very much I doubt,
What sort of profit wilt thou get thereout ?

XXVIII

‘Thou wilt but wake the wrath of envious priests ;
These will spring on thee like bloodthirsty beasts,
And rend thee as a tiger rends a kid ;
Or by some secret dagger-stroke will rid
Themselves of one who meddles with their gains ;
Or ban thee as an impious wretch, whom pains
Of hell await, and hurtful as a pest,
And leave the bigot crowd to do the rest.

XXIX

‘Hast thou no thought of those who sit alone,
And mourn thy absence ?’ Sakya gave a groan.
‘Return !’ the king said, ‘and without delay,
Lest thou returning on some later day
Have but stiff welcome.’ Thus he sought to find
Some argument to change Siddhártha’s mind ;
But laboured unavailingly, and so
Perceiving this, at last he let him go.

xxx

But ere they parted, thus the king spake : ‘ Prince,
As I have fail’d to move thee or convince
Thee of the folly of this toilsome task,
I will not keep thee longer than to ask
One favour of thee, and it is, that when
Thou hast found out deliverance for men
Thou wilt come hither early, and make known
Thy gospel to us dwellers in this town ;

xxxI

‘ And I will give—what surely thou wilt need—
Protection to thy person and thy creed.
Whate’er may be the product of thy thought
It must be better than what now is taught.
Farewell ! our aims are diverse ; yet, oh friend,
We may be of one mind towards the end.’
So Gaútama consenting to this thing,
Passed from the presence of the kindly king,

xxxII

And went his way, and turn’d his feet once more
Towards the Brahman’s dwelling. Long before
He came thereto, a crowd was at his heels,
For Rumour had gone forth upon the wheels
Of her swift chariot, and noised his fame :
So flocking to their doors the people came
To catch a glimpse of him as he passed by
With calm demeanour and with downcast eye.

XXXIII

Now when the Brahman lookt on him he said,
(Well eyeing him) ' Friend, certain men have spread
A strange report, concerning some great lord
Come hither in disguise : thou dost accord
With their description : say now, art thou he ?
' O master, I am what all eyes may see,'
He answered ; ' yet indeed a lord I was,
And I will tell thee how it comes to pass

XXXIV

' That I am here.' So he began to show
The Brahman all he cared to let him know
Of his past life ; which learning, he cried : ' Son,
Believe me thou hast well and wisely done
To turn thy feet into the way of peace :
Continue in it, and thou shalt not miss
The good thou seekest. Long thou shalt not pine,
For I have settled harder doubts than thine.'

XXXV

So in that city he abode to learn
What he might teach him ; and to pant and yearn
For knowledge that would satisfy his mind—
To prove this wise man's wisdom, and to find
The sophist lurking underneath the sage,
And all his fame a lying title-page,
Whereunder lay the scribbling of a fool
Or learnèd pedant of the sacred school.

XXXVI

‘ They know not truth, and yet pretend that they
Have turned the night of nature into day ;
And made a plain path for all wandering feet.
They are not wise but in their own conceit,
And all who trust them wander in a night
More dark than nature’s : what they reckon light
Is but thick darkness. They are skill’d alone
In seeking and in holding fast their own.

XXXVII

‘ Moreover,’ pondered Sakya, ‘ how should they
Who profit most by error lead the way
To reformation, when the same must cost
The giving up of what they value most ?
Their hearts are narrow; I must look elsewhere
For that salvation wherein all may share.
I know their bigotry and scorn and pride,
They thrust the outcast and the poor aside.

XXXVIII

‘ Their heavens are narrow, but full wide and deep
Have they made all their heels ; as flocks of sheep
Are driven home on far Mongolian plains
They drive the helpless down to untold pains ;
All necks are wounded and all shoulders peel’d
Beneath their yokes and burdens : they have steel’d
Their hearts against compassion, so they can
Bring no deliverance at all to man.

XXXIX

I will go into solitude, and there
Seek what thus vainly I have sought elsewhere.
The silence of the voiceless woods may teach
A higher wisdom than man's babbling speech,
A deeper knowledge than his childish lore ;
And even the crash of tempests and the roar
Of thunderings reverberating round
Prove more than unintelligible sound.

XL

' But we perceive it not, because our ears
Are dulled by reason of our sin-bred fears,
Or that we know no language save our own.
How often have I heard the sad wind moan
Like one who mourneth in some house of death !
How often have I heard with holden breath
Great thunder voices pealing from on high
Rich with the awful secrets of the sky !

XLI

' Moreover, hitherto I may have lived
Too daintily, and so have not arrived
At what I seek for : whatsoe'er the cost
I will now test unto the uttermost
The harsh austerities that some profess.
Hereby I surely shall get good, unless
The world has err'd ; for millions at this hour
Deem such austerities a mighty power.'

XLII

Now when he spake of his intent there came
To him five men, disciples of that same
Wise Brahman, saying : ' We will go with thee ;
Deny us not this kindness ; thou shalt be
The ruler of our band : thou shalt not lack
A master's honour : we will not hang back
Lead where thou wilt. What sayest thou ? thy face
Bespeaks thee willing to accord this grace.'

XLIII

He answered : ' If this be your mind, and ye
Have counted all the cost, so let it be :
Ye shall be sharers in my hope and pain,
Nor shall ye be forgotten when I gain
The good I seek for. I will put no yoke
On your free shoulders, but ye may revoke
Your promise whenso ye may deem it good.
Let each be free to follow his own mood.'

XLIV

So they went forth from Rajagaha, led
By Sakya-muni, for the five had said,
' At least be thou our leader by the way.'
So they went forth, and on a certain day
The cloudlike masses of a mighty wood
Rose up before them, and ere long they stood
Within the shelter of their forest-home—
Their broad asylum for long years to come.

CANTO VII.

I

WITHIN this forest, practising the most
Severe austerities that saint could boast,
Dwelt Sakya-muni. Months and years went past,
Each spent in greater rigour than the last.
In fruitless fasting and unanswered prayer,
And toilsome thought they went : the barren air
Brought forth no answer to his many sighs,
And vain were all his efforts to be wise.

II

Why hath the wild wind such a mournful tone ?
In part indeed, but surely not alone,
Because it cometh saddened and in haste
From roaming over the great arctic waste,
And round the deathful silence of the pole,
And from its rough coasts, where the surges roll
Amid the ice packs, that with dismal roar
Are crusht and ground against the iron shore.

III

Nor that it cometh from broad deserts curst
With hopeless barrenness and slakeless thirst,
Wherethro' the traveller hasteth with all speed,
As for his life ; well knowing he hath need
Of God's good help to guide him lest he stray
And perish, wandering from the bone-strewn way,
And leave his bones to whiten in the sun
As hapless travellers before have done.

IV

Nor yet because it ever wanders o'er
The ruins of great cities, now no more
The habitations of the sons of men ;
Where undisturbed, the wild beast makes his den ;
Where fearlessly the timid serpent crawls
Mid well-wrought columns and rich capitals,
The boast and glory of a former day
Whereof the memory has nigh passed away.

V

Nor that because in ever-journeying round
About the world, it everywhere has found
The sunlit ocean and the earth beneath
Full-garnered with the harvesting of death—
That earth-wide Hades and the wide seas hold
The dead, more numerous a thousandfold
Than all the living thro' the breadth and girth
Of this well-trodden, many-peopled earth.

VI

For these it mourns, but not alone for these,
It sighs in summer through the thick-leaved trees.
Or mourns in winter through the naked boughs ;
Or wails about the closed doors of the house :
It is because that into it are breathed
The sighs of all mankind, which, interwreathed
With cryings of all such as be in pain,
Roam evermore about the earth and main ;

VII

Mixt with the groanings of a burdened earth,
The bitterness of those that curse their birth ;
The sighings of all such as pray for death
With vain petitions ; and the gasping breath
Sent forth with anguish from death-quivering lips ;
And shrieks and groanings from fast-sinking ships,
And cryings unto gods that cannot hear,
And prayers to One that will not, tho' the fear

VIII

Of Him be in the hearts of those that pray.
Not for our sorrows do the skies of day
Go into mourning of black clouds, or birds
Cease their blithe carolling, or grazing herds
Fast with sad lowings mid the sweet green grass :
Yet not unnoted do our sorrows pass ;
Kind Nature heeds and bids the sad winds blow
About the world this record of our woe.

IX

And this is why the wind hath such a drear
And mournful voice : in winter ye may hear
The sound thereof rise to a very wail
Of wildest anguish, till the heart shall fail
And shudder as it hears the piercing sound ;
And in the summer, when all else hath found
A voice of gladness, sighing thro' green leaves,
Again the voice goes, like a soul that grieves.

X

O Sakya! surely thy vain tears and sighs
Have swelled the mournful music of the skies ;
In vain thou soughtest after God and truth :
Thy sighings toucht not Brahma with soft ruth,
Nor wakt compassion in the slumberous breast
Of Brahm, who, buried in a selfish rest,
Remembers not the world that he has made,
Nor the poor suppliants that ask his aid.

XI

No god spake in the thunder : calm and storm
Alike were empty of all help : no form
Of god or deva roamed about or stood
Beneath the thick trees of that mighty wood
With proffered succour, as they did of old
If men speak truth. But surely they have told
Us fables not a few, to make us sigh
With fruitless longings for a time gone by ;

XII

Or rather for a time that ne'er has been.
Was ever mighty god or goddess seen
In manifested glory on the earth,
Rebuking evil, and rewarding mirth,
And succouring the needy when they cried ?
Nay ! men have called upon their gods and died
With prayers upon their lips, and yet no whit
Holpen, except it be unto the pit.

XIII

Yet God is good, tho' Baal hear us not,
And Belus disregard, and tho' our lot
Be nothing bettered by our cries to Zeus ;
Tho' prayer to Jupiter prove of no use ;
Tho' Brahm still slumber in a slothful rest ;
And tho' the nations of the north and west
For ages sought their gods in humble terms,
And yet went down unholpen to the worms.

XIV

And God is merciful, tho' man be born
To toil and sorrow ; tho' his sighs forlorn
Burden the winds : yea and He is most wise.
All ye who doubt it, lift your fretful eyes
Up to the heav'ns, and say no more hard things
Of His great ways, for all such words have wings
And hasten upward with accusing tone
To Him who sitteth on the great white throne.

XV

God hath his plan, and He will work it out
Despite our foolish crying. Have no doubt,
The scheme is merciful and wise and good,
Tho' neither we ourselves have understood,
Nor yet our fathers, how this thing can be
We shall rejoice the perfect work to see :
God will not stay His hand tho' men repine,
Nor shall our folly mar the work divine.

XVI

But Sakya-muni cried : 'Hear me, great Brahm,
In thy far heaven ! forget not that I am
A portion of Thine essence. Wilt Thou not
Have pity on us and our wretched lot ?
Thou madest us, and in our hearts hast put
Deep longings ; and yet bound us hand and foot
In scapeless fetters of relentless fate.
Have pity on us and our mean estate.

XVII

'O show the path wherein we ought to walk ;
And tho' indeed we may not hope to baulk
Death of its victims, nor prevail to save
Ourselves by virtue from the sateless grave,
Yet make us wise, that we may live our 'lives'
At least with cheerfulness : till death arrives
We are tormented with vile fears and dumb
With brooding over evil days to come.

XVIII

‘ Our life is mystery ; our death is gloom.
Is there a life for us beyond the tomb ?
Or hast Thou made us creatures of a day,
To live our little lives, then pass away
Utterly and for ever ? Thou dost hide
These matters from us, and our priests have lied,
And led us in a way that is not good ;
And fed us with unsatisfying food.

XIX

‘ O surely men speak falsely when they say
Thou art too mighty, or too far away,
To vex Thyself with our mean hopes and fears.
O let my crying reach into Thine ears,
And send salvation down ! then evermore
Thou shalt have all our love ; we will adore
Thee only and Thee wholly ; all our days
Thou shalt have offerings of prayer and praise.’

XX

But there was none that answered : daylight brought
No inner light to guide him : then he thought,
‘ The night shall teach me ;’ but the night always
Was filled with howlings of the beasts of prey ;
And other answer gat he none at all.
Mark this, ye twice-born—ye that still extol
Great Brahm and Krishna and the Sacred Three,
And all the host to whom ye bow the knee.

XXI

And yet not wholly barren of all good
Was Sakya's life within that sheltering wood.
For he, beholding the continual strife
Of all that therein drew the breath of life—
Their joys and sorrows—felt compassion steal
Into his heart, ev'n for those things the heel
Grinds into nothing, and then passes on,
Unweeting that a life is quencht and gone.

XXII

Not carelessly was he content to view
The insect drowning in a drop of dew ;
The upturned beetle powerless to rise :
Nor without succour lookt on drowning flies
Whirled helplessly adown some tiny brook :
Nor yet without compassion could he look
Upon the anguish of the mangled worm,
Or strife or suffering in any form.

XXIII

To him the endless war of Nature seemed
Not otherwise than evil, for he dreamed
Of rest and peace and brotherhood ; yet felt
That wheresoever these abode, they dwelt
As far removed from nature as from man :
'Is all the world,' he sighed, 'beneath the ban
Of some fell being who doth take delight
In murderous death and discord and affright?

XXIV

‘For earth and sky, the forest and the flood,
Are pastures for fierce things that live on blood ;
These fill the earth with terror : night and day,
The innocent and gentle fall their prey.’
For he had heard the dove’s despairing cry
As the hawk seized her ; and had watcht the sly
Deceiving serpent ; and had seen the stoat
Sucking the life-blood from the rabbit’s throat ;

XXV

And watcht awhile, forgetful of all fear,
The hungry tiger rend the dying deer ;
Beheld the gasping roebuck crusht between
The tight folds of the mighty snake ; and seen
The wounded ox gored by its kind ; then fled
Groaning from that detested sight : ill sped,
He met the same elsewhere, and learnt how vain
It is to flee from misery and pain.

XXVI

Priest of the yellow robe and shaven crown,
Say why it is that ere thou sittest down
Thou brushest carefully the lowly seat
Which thou hast chosen ? Dost thou fear to meet
With some defilement ? Why dost thou refrain
Thy dry lips from the jar until thou strain
The cooling water which erewhile men took
Pure, fresh, and sparkling from the running brook ?

XXVII

'Art thou a stranger in this land, that so
'Thou askest of these things?' he saith; 'then know
That in my hand I bear about this brush
To sweep the ground I sit on, lest I crush
The life from out some thing that draweth breath;
Likewise to keep me from the guilt of death
I use this filter, in the hope to save
Some hapless insect from a living grave.

XXVIII

'And this I do because our great lord Boodh,
Who gave himself to be the tiger's food,
Said, "Take ye not the life of sentient things,
So shall ye know the joy that pity brings;
And hereby also ye may all attain
More readily unto the End of pain,
Ev'n that Nirvána whereof ye have heard."
I take my refuge in him and his word.'

XXIX

Be not too lavish of thy scorn on these
Deluded heathen and their practices;
Nor slow to read herein the evidence—
Nor loth to own the softening influence—
Of Buddha's doctrine, which somewhat at least
Has changed the hard heart of the cruel East,
And made men merciful, and toucht the chords
Of pity in the hearts of savage hordes.

XXX

No great voice bids you let all creatures live,
Nor take away the life you cannot give :
No hard commandment cries : ' It is not good
To slay your fellow-beings for your food :
Have ye not harvests of the vine and corn,
And fruits and herbs that from the earth are born
And nourisht without sorrow and hard strife ?
Against these things alone lift up the knife :

XXXI

' But let all breathing things live on in peace ;
So shall your health and happiness increase.'
To you the voice cries : ' Freely take and eat
Whate'er ye lust for : all things are your meat :
All things are yours, do with them as ye will.'
And yet amid your feasting, thinking still
Of bloodless Eden, sigh ye for the same,
Nor be of those who glory in their shame.

XXXII

Amid this forest six long years wore past ;
And surely now, the next had been his last
Had he continued as he erst had done
His useless penance. He had grown like one
Who strives with famine. Thro' the shrunken skin
Gleamed the foundations of the house. His kin,
Yea the most loving of them all, would ne'er
Have recognised him had they seem him there.

XXXIII

But finding all asceticism vain—
An utter weariness—a bootless pain—
A hindering evil that wise men should shun—
He cast it from him, crying : ‘ I have done
With thee, thou lying shadow ! I have tried
Thy vaunted virtues ; and I will not hide
Thy hollowness from men : thou empty dearth,
Farewell for ever, for I know thy worth.’

XXXIV

And so he changed his habit, and at length
Recovered somewhat of his former strength :
And therewithal he gat a healthier mind ;
Yet not the less for hidden truth he pin’d
Nor ceast to seek it. But the five perceived
His altered living, and their hearts were grieved ;
So coming to him, they addressed him thus :
‘ How is it, friend, that thou who leddest us

XXXV

‘ Once on the heavenly road, hast left the track,
Tho’ we abide therein ? thou hangest back,
Nor strivest any more to reach the goal
That all men seek ; nor dost afflict thy soul
With God-compelling pains for thy best good ? ’
He answered : ‘ All these years within this wood
By self-inflicted weariness and pain
Have I sought knowledge, but have sought in vain.

XXXVI

‘ I have err’d greatly : I too long have fed
My soul on hope’s unsatisfying bread,
And looked for grain where there is nought but chaff ;
And leaned myself upon a rotten staff ;
For I have tested to the uttermost
The vain austerities whereof ye boast,
“ They make the weak strong and the foolish wise ; ”
And I have found them vanities and lies.’

XXXVII

Then answered they : ‘ We sorrow for the change
That has come over thee. Thy words are strange
And somewhat impious. Hast thou not read
Of mighty saints and rishis, long since dead,
And of their wondrous wisdom and great might ?
And yet these all attained unto that height
By that which thou in thy despairing mood
Dost reckon barren of all saving good.’

XXXVIII

He answered calmly : ‘ From my earliest youth
Have I heard such like fables ; but in truth
I heeded them but little, for I said,
“ These wonder-working saints are always dead,
And these great sages all of times gone by ; ”
But ye would have me wait until I die
For my reward, when death, for aught I know,
Is everlasting nothingness—not so.

XXXIX

‘ I seek not death, but that which may remove
The fear thereof, and of all ill ; and prove
Salvation for the living. Ye have grief ;
Perchance ye have fared better than your chief.
They cried : ‘ Thou speakest as the wicked speak.
Thou hast grown impious, and now dost seek
To cast contempt upon what all men call
Most good and holy. There will surely fall

XL

‘ Some punishment upon thee for thy sin.
But now, lest thou corrupt us, and we win
A like reward, we will go forth this day,
And thou canst follow thine own froward way,
If so thou willest, after we are gone.
Thy hurtful influence may fall upon
The creatures of the wood, but not on us.’
To these accusings he made answer thus :

XLI

‘ Did I not say when first we sought this wood,
“ Let each be free to do what seemeth good
In his own eyes ” ? So ye are free to go
And leave me, since ye reckon me a foe
To your well-being : and ye shall depart
Unblamed by me ; yea, rather from my heart
Shall prayers go after you when ye are gone,
And in this forest I abide alone.

XLII

‘ Farewell, and may ye prosper : but I still
Will bide within this wood for good or ill
A little longer at the most, and then
I shall know all.’ Then three of those five men
Stood wavering whether they should stay or go,
Toucht with soft pity ; but the other two
Thrust them before them, chiding with harsh tone ;
And so they left him standing there alone.

CANTO VIII.

I

THUS left in utter solitude, without
The help of god or man, from faith to doubt,
From doubt unto denial, fast he fell :
For doubt laid siege unto the citadel
And overthrew it. Long ago, indeed,
The superstructure of his fathers' creed
Had fall'n as falls a rotten pile of stone—
Now was the whole foundation overthrown.

II

He sought for God, but found Him not among
The gods of whom the ancient poets sung ;
Nor those to whom the later singers bow'd ;
Nor those then worshipt by the sunken crowd ;
Nor those to whom the wise and learnèd pray'd ;
Nor those which the philosophers had made.
He sought Him in the crowded fanes, and then
In solitude far from the ways of men.

III

‘There is no God,’ he cried ; ‘our gods are nought
But mighty offspring of the fertile thought
Of poets, and philosophers, and priests.
Beast-like are some, and in the form of beasts
Well are they graven, seeing they are kin ;
The best are shadows, and can never win
The love of human hearts, that vainly pine
To rest themselves upon a power divine.

IV

‘Poor worshippers of nought, those whom we call
Our gods and saviours are no gods at all,
Nor saviours of the feeble in distress.
They cannot punish us when we transgress,
Nor yet reward us with becoming meed,
When we, who are but the poor sinful seed
Of evil doers, born in evil days,
Do deeds deserving of unstinted praise.

V

‘There is no God for us to serve and love ;
No great unerring Ruler throned above,
To whom we may in adoration kneel.
To whom then shall the poor opprest appeal ?
To whom for timely succour shall we pray ?
To whom shall we be grateful in the day
Of our prosperity ? and when our breath
Fails, who shall be our confidence in death ?

VI

‘ There is no God nor higher power than man,
And he poor wretch lives but a little span—
A little while he looks upon the light,
Then sinks into the nothingness and night
From whence he rose ; for when he dies, he dies
Utterly and for ever : in no wise
Does he live on when once he yields his breath,
Nor shall he have deliverance from death.

VII

‘ All immortality is but a dream—
The ravings of distempered minds that deem
Their own sick fancies are sufficient proof
Of their vain longings: as some well-wrought roof
Not well supported falleth, so shall fall
The baseless hopes of men ; and such are all
That look for life in death, and bid men wait
The sure fruition of a future state.

VIII

‘ The just man’s hopes shall never be fulfill’d,
Nor yet the bad man’s fears ; alike, these build
Upon the sand of lies ; and this poor life,
With its deep longings and its toil and strife,
Is our whole portion : none may hope to win
A better by strict abstinence from sin ;
And evil doers, if they now escape,
Need fear no punishment in any shape.

IX

‘ Alas for us that this vain life is all ! ’
So heavy sorrow, not unmixt with gall,
Was in his heart. For he was sore distress
At such a bitter ending of his quest.
‘ Would not the wicked,’ he would sigh, ‘ be glad
To have the knowledge that now makes me sad ?
Would not well-doers feel their hands fall slack
And merit-seekers falter and turn back ?

X

‘ Shall I go forth and teach what now I know ?
And cry: “Ye sad-faced travellers that go
The weary way that leads from birth to death,
Disquieted in vain, ye waste your breath
In sighings over ills that but exist
In your own minds, which darkened by the mist
Of priest-bred errors are grown dense with fears,
Whereof come agonies and sighs and tears.

XI

‘ “ There is no God, and all the gods are nought
But names and shadows. Ye have long been taught
To look for help where never help was found :
Be your own helpers, so shall help abound.
Let love and brotherhood allay the strife
And heal the sorrows of this fleeting life.
And grieve not overmuch whate’er befall,
For that soon cometh which shall end it all.”

XII

‘ A God-accursèd, God-forsaken man,
Would all men deem me ; and the potent ban
Of priests would crush me: for these all would say,
“ The gods are wrath because ye do not slay
This impious wretch : destroy him, and thereby
Ye shall find favour with the gods on high,
And save you from the wrath which else must fall
With scapeless horrors and destroy us all.”

XIII

‘ So I should fall a victim to their fears.
And yet if I lived on for many years
To preach these doctrines, and had great success,
And changed the faith of men, this thing no less
Would be an evil ; for my words might lead
The upright man from virtue—sow the seed
Of sin and folly in the wise man’s heart—
And wound the patient with a rankling dart.

XIV

‘ The wicked when I said, “ There is no God,”
Would bless me, saying : “ Thou hast snapt the rod
That was to smite us ; thou art wise and kind.
Now will we do according to our mind,
And have no fear of heav’n and feel no shame
In our ill-doing ; blessèd be thy name !
Our bonds are loosened ; there is none to smite
Tho’ we do wickedness with all our might.”’

XV

Then prudence murmured : ' Seeing thou canst not
Change for the better the unhappy lot
Of wretched mortals, if thou art possest
Of any wisdom, cease this bootless quest :
Quit this dull solitude : forget thy grief,
Soon time and change will bring thee full relief ;
Look to the mending of thine own estate,
And leave the people to themselves and fate.

XVI

' With due discretion, and some little pain,
If thou think fit thou mayest yet regain
Thy lost position : there are those who still
Await thy coming. Surely thou couldst fill
A throne with honour : strive no more with fate ;
As king, thou couldst best alleviate
The sufferings of men, and work them good :
Couldst thou not teach them as none other could ?

XVII

' And at the least thou mayest hope to get
A little pleasure from thy vain life yet.
'Tis not too late : thine age is in its flower ;
And health and wealth and beauty is thy dower :
Is there no good in mirth ? no joy in wine ?
Are not fair women reckoned half divine ?
Is not good fellowship a pleasant thing ?
Return, return, and reign, a happy king.'

XVIII

He murmured : ‘ Yea, return, and let my name
Become a by-word, till for very shame
I bide within the palace, nor go forth
For fear of men’s derision : of what worth
If it were otherwise would my life be ?
For I must hide my faith, nor let men see
That I despise their creed, for were this known,
Tho’ monarch, they would slay me on the throne.

XIX

‘ But with my knowledge could I any more
Find pleasure in these things, when o’er and o’er
Each has been proved an unsufficing good ?
Nay, evermore amid them all I should
Imagine I could hear the nations cry,
“ Hast thou no pity ? lo ! we live and die
From age to age, unholpen and unblest—
Why sittest thou so carelessly at rest ?”

XX

‘ Nay, rather than live thus, I will go forth
And lose a life now grown of little worth,
In martyrdom to truth : and yet I know
By doing thus I should not overthrow
The errors that have taken such deep root
Throughout the land and borne such evil fruit ;
For rather would the priests whom I should vex
Set firmer feet upon their victims’ necks.’

XXI

So in deep thought the great recluse abode,
Pondering upon a world without a God,
And man without a future ; and the cause
Of all existence ; and the various laws
That bind the universe ; and what was best
For man to do—man, the poor flitting guest
Of stedfast Nature, nourisher and tomb
Of all that had been and that were to come.

XXII

And well persuaded that should people learn
The knowledge he had gained, it would but turn
To their undoing, for he could but own
That few love Virtue for herself alone ;
And loth to see his cherisht hopes depart,
And man unsuccour'd, he applied his heart
To see if any help for human need
Might yet be hidden in the ancient creed.

XXIII

For thus he reasoned : ‘ Since this creed is both
Of such wide-spreading and gigantic growth
That none may fell it, even if he would,
And yet not wholly barren of all good ;
Unsmitten by me it shall live on and grow ;
Yet here and there will I lop off a bough ;
And learning wisdom from the pruner’s craft,
Upon the shorten’d boughs I will engraft

XXIV

‘ That which shall not be barren of fair fruit
And wholesome ; nourisht from the alien root,
And drawing vigour from the ancient stock.
Men do not sow upon a barren rock,
But they will build thereon, and if well skilled,
Upon this hard foundation I may build
A system that shall stand and brave decay,
Till the foundations of the world give way.

XXV

‘ This will I do ; for I have hope that now
A way is opened. My heart says, “ Go thou
And prosper, and do even as thou wilt
To work thy work. Thou shalt incur no guilt,
Tho’ teaching error and concealing truth ;
Because thou doest it from love and ruth,
And these flow not from a polluted fount.
There is no God to call thee to account.” ’

XXVI

Thenceforth with him the hours passed not in vain,
Nor idly, if the toiling of the brain
Be counted labour. With intensest thought,
And meditation most profound, he wrought,
Creating and destroying, dreaming dreams,
And forming purposes and plans and schemes.
O, careless world, it is a work that none
May lightly speak of that is now begun !

XXVII

A work that shall not perish, nor long need
The smile of kings : a great wide-spreading creed,
The mightiest of all the faiths of old.
Shall not the stars fade and the sun grow cold
Before it be forgotten? Unexempt
From human error, who shall dare attempt
To follow all the wanderings of that mind
That gave this mighty system to mankind ?

XXVIII

Yet surely, with unheeding brutes and birds,
We yet may listen to the burning words
Of his deep musings, as by night and day
He sought the shadow or pursued his way
About the forest. Let us then draw near ;
The thick woods hide us, so we all may hear
The words he uttered in those pregnant weeks,
In his outspoken musings. Hist ! he speaks.

XXIX

‘ The mountains and the oceans are the bars
To all our knowledge of this earth : the stars
Are mysteries beyond the utmost reach
Of our poor knowledge, whatso men may teach.
The origin of all things who can show ?
And who the ending ? Knowledge is but slow,
Yet surely wisdom is of slower growth ;
What man can tarry for the fruits of both ?

XXX

‘ Yet since the cramping boundaries of our ken
Are far too narrow for the minds of men,
Who never have the wit to be content
With present knowledge, I will now invent
A mighty universe of worlds, and fill
Them all with beings knowing good and ill,
Of diverse natures, and of diverse powers ;
Some shall fill hells, and some celestial bowers.

XXXI

‘ The world shall keep its hells wherein are crammed
The miserable millions of the damned ;
The fear thereof may hold the wicked back
From their impiety. Men shall not lack
Their flowery paradises : they shall feast
Upon the food of gods in thought at least,
And know their joys, and live awhile their life,
In blest exemption from all evil strife.

XXXII

‘ The gods shall live, but not as in past days,
For I will famish them with lack of praise,
And make them lean thro’ famine of men’s prayers.
I will degrade them ; in the world’s affairs
I will appoint them but a little part :
Man shall rely on his own hand and heart.
I will subject them to the laws that bind
The less exalted millions of mankind.

XXXIII

‘ Man, a poor insect, trembling on the brink
Of nothingness, to which he soon must sink,
Shall be, as some imagine him—endued
With immortality, or life renewed
From death to death, and still unceasing change
Shall terrify him : I will make him range
Thro’ all the many forms of life that dwell
Throughout the regions of heav’n, earth, and hell.

XXXIV

‘ Concerning death I will invent a most
Refined and subtle doctrine that may boast
Of being better far than truth ; for all
The elements of man at death shall fall
Apart for ever ; yet what he has done
As a creative power shall still live on,
And build another life which shall inherit
Its predecessor’s merit or demerit.

XXXV

‘ So death shall be somewhat as heretofore,
No full and final ending, but a door
Wherethro’ men enter into other life.
Who can remove the fear of that last strife,
Tho’ it may end in Paradise? Can I
Make it less bitter for a man to die?
If so the world shall yet attest my worth,
I shall win blessings from a grateful earth.

XXXVI

‘ But since in all existence there is grief
 And unreality : and all is brief
 And unsufficing ; life is not a boon,
 But something other ; so I will not prune
 The branches merely, but uproot the tree :
 There is no other way to set men free—
 No other way whereby a man may gain
 Exemption from disquietude and pain.

XXXVII

‘ Cessation of existence I will call
 Nirvána and my Rest. This shall not fall
 As a calamity, but it shall be
 My highest good—my greatest bliss, and he
 Who is yet subject to the ills of birth,
 And weighs all pleasures well, and knows their worth,
 Shall deem my Rest the greatest good that can
 Be tasted by the longing heart of man.

XXXVIII

‘ This heritage of all, I will confine
 To good men only ; for I will assign
 Unto the wicked many grievous woes,
 And never-ceasing change and scant repose.
 Imaginary evils all, yet these
 May serve to keep the wicked ill at ease :
 They shall not hope in other worlds to miss
 The punishment they have escaped in this.

XXXIX

‘ For merit and demerit shall be lords
Of human destiny. They shall be cords
To bind or draw man ; and they shall create
His good and evil, and his very fate.
Men shall do good, or they shall reap indeed,
Ev’n to the last grain, all the cursèd seed
That they have sown. Repentance shall not stop
Nor mar the ripening of the hateful crop.

XL

‘ I will so paint man’s life that it shall seem
As little better than a painful dream—
A weary pilgrimage—a bootless quest
For undiscoverable good—a nest
Of many and sore evils ; and far worse,
A heavy burden ; yea and half a curse—
A toilsome vanity in every shape,
Wherefrom the wicked never shall escape.

XLI

‘ And I will paint Nirvána in such dyes,
That it shall seem more lovely in men’s eyes
Than all the gardens of the gods ; for all
Who dwell within those happy heavens may fall
From their bright eminence, and wake in hell,
Or in the forms of beasts ; but those who dwell
In my calm heaven shall have a full release
From all the changes that destroy our peace.

XLII

‘ So men shall seek my Rest : their hearts shall yearn
For its deep quiet. They will strive to earn
The merit that shall bring them thereunto.
Men shall seek nothingness as wretches, who,
Kept wakeful by long suffering, seek to gain
Deep sleep wherein is neither joy nor pain
But calm unconsciousness : all pain shall cease
Within my City and my Home of Peace.

XLIII

‘ But all who reach my Rest must first obtain
Sufficient merit : this all men may gain
By walking in my paths, which are no less
Than purity, and love, and tenderness
Towards each other and all sentient things ;
Truthfulness, and the temperance that brings
Health to the frame and vigour to the mind.
So shall my laws prove blessings to mankind.

XLIV

I will forbid my followers to take
The life of sentient things : I will awake
Compassion in the cruel heart of men ;
For why should we abridge the little span
Of aught that lives? Who has not err'd thro' wine?
I will forbid all followers of mine
To taste strong drink, and lead them to give up
The joys of the intoxicating cup.

XLV

‘ Men shall form one great brotherhood. Since all
Have one beginning and one end, they shall
Have equal privilege and common rights.
I will exalt the depths and plane the heights,
And raise the fallen, and remove that ban
That checks the sympathy of man with man :
Caste is one source of insolence and pride
Which all my followers shall put aside.

XLVI

‘ But when they say to me : “ And who art thou
That teachest these new doctrines ? When and how
Didst thou attain this knowledge ? ” I will say,
“ One higher than the highest every way,
And wiser than the wisest ; for I know
The secret of existence, and can show
The way whereby men may obtain release,
And find the City and the Land of Peace.

XLVII

‘ “ My name is THE ENLIGHTENED. I behold
Things long forgotten ; and I can unfold
What is, and has been, and is yet to be.
The world shall learn my wisdom ; and by me
The gods shall be enlightened. I attained
This knowledge by the merit I had gained
And gathered thro’ innumerable years
Of all well-doing. Hear ye that have ears.

XLVIII

‘ “ And yet I am but one of those who rise
At mighty intervals to make men wise
In long-forgotten wisdom, and the lore
That brings salvation with it. We restore
The long-deserted paths, and gather out
The weeds of error, ignorance, and doubt ;
And sow the seed whose harvests yield the bread
By which the nations of the world are fed.

XLIX

‘ “ Earth is a vain show : heaven a vain reward :
The wise shall not love either ; neither hoard
A treasure here, for all things pass away ;
In paradise they shall not seek to stay,
But look beyond, and reckon none are blest
But those who reach unto my perfect rest.
'Tis vain to cry unto the gods for aid ;
They cannot save us whom they have not made.”

L

‘ But I must fence myself on every side
With skilful arguments : I must provide
For all contingencies, and not be lame
In utterance or answer : I must frame
Fit answers for the wise man and the fool ;
And, hardest task of all, I now must school
My untaught countenance, and lips, and heart
A guileful wisdom ; each must play its part

LI

‘ In this deception. Would that men were wise,
And needed not the aid of pleasant lies
To ’tice them on to virtue !’ Thus he mused.
The days beheld him dream : the nights refused
To bless his eyes with sleep. His noble form
Stood out amid the calm, and when the storm
Raged, and the trees bowed as a field of grain
Bows at the passing of the wind and rain.

LII

At length his work was perfected : at length
Adorned with beauty and ribbed round with strength
The whole stood out before him. Men feel pride
In what their hands have fashioned, so he eyed
His work with calm complaisance. He had wrought
With carefulness and long laborious thought ;
And now like one of old as he surveyed
He loved the cunning work that he had made.

CANTO IX.

I

Now I, who hitherto have not eschewed
Old legends bent on glorifying Boodh,
Will add another. There be those who say
He gat his knowledge in another way,
To wit as follows :—When the Bódhisat
Perceived his hour draw near, he went and sat
Beneath the Bo-tree, vowing not to rise
Till he became the wisest of the wise.

II

Upon a radiant throne he sat, for thus
Each Bódhisat attains the glorious
Fruition of his toils : so throned thereon
He thought great thoughts, while in his face there shone
Unutterable peace, for now the prize
Seemed ready to be graspt, and in such wise
He thought thereon that he could well withstand
The great temptation now so near at hand.

III

For Mára, Bódhisat's unwearied foe,
Perceived his coming triumph, and aglow
With rage hereat, had gathered up his force
For one last effort: he would bar the course
Of Bódhisat who, with the goal in sight,
Feared not this being tho' he knew his might :
Was not the victory as good as won ?
Should he not conquer ere the setting sun ?

IV

Now learn the reason for the hostile part
That Wasawártti played. In his hard heart
He reason'd thus : ' If Bódhisat but reach
The goal of his ambition, he will teach
All men and devas how they may attain
Nirvána : these by hearing him will gain
Much merit, by the which they in the end
Will to the higher Brahma-worlds ascend ;

V

' And so my well-filled deva-world will grow
A vast and empty wilderness, and lo !
I shall reign over deserts void of men,
And one by one my kin will pass, and then
Shall I not seem a fool in mine own eyes !
Now will I surely do what in me lies
To change this threatened and this evil fate,
Lest I repent me when it is too late.'

VI

So in pursuance of his vow he tried
To turn the stedfast Bódhisat aside
From his firm purpose, and to gain this end
He feigned himself to be the prince's friend
When he rode forth upon that festal night
To turn ascetic ; for the pale moonlight
Show'd the great city gates all firmly barr'd,
While at the same a double watch kept ward.

VII

And there against his will the prince had stay'd,
Had not the devas, coming to his aid,
Flung wide the massive doors and let him thro'.
And this good deed they did, because they knew
That he, who then of their poor help had need,
Should op'n for them the gates that they might speed
Into that City where alone is peace,
And matchless quiet that will never cease.

VIII

Then Mára stood before the prince and cried :
' Oh prince, on what wild errand dost thou ride ?
Strive thou no longer for this empty thing ;
Stay thou and be an universal king :
The lordship of the world may be thine own,
And all its glories ; and around thy throne
Shall hosts of subject kings watch for thy nod
And bow before thee as men do to God.'

IX

Thereto he answered him : ‘ Who art thou, pray,
That with fair promises dost bar my way?
Speak quickly for I am in haste.’ Whereat
He told his title and his rank, and gat
This answer : ‘ All thine offers I disdain ;
O tempter, thou hast tempted me in vain :
I seek the Buddhaship, not worldly store :
Get from my path and trouble me no more.’

X

Then Mára gnashed his teeth for rage of heart
To be thus foiled and bidden to depart,
And rose into the air and cried : ‘ Since now
I am become thine enemy, look thou
To find thy pathway ever blockt and barr’d
And full of snares ; for I will make it hard
Beyond its wont, and I will put forth all
My guileful wisdom to achieve thy fall.

XI

‘ And like thy shadow will I cleave to thee
Thro’ all thy course, which from this time shall be
Thick strewn with stumbling blocks, and if thou gain
This wisht-for dignity, may grief and pain
Be with it, yet in that same hour will I
Come with a host to vex thee.’ Then the sky
Closed round him and he suddenly was gone :
Then undismayed the Bódhisat rode on.

XII

So now, too faithful to his word, he blew
A blast upon his mighty conch, and drew
His hosts together, and with cruel skill
Instructed them to work his envious will ;
And thereupon with all this host swept past
The startled spheres like wind, and came at last
To where the glorious being whom he sought
Bode in world-cleaving and all-conquering thought.

XIII

With horrid clamour, this earth-burdening host
Prest round the Bo-tree, and assumed the most
Terrific shapes : all hateful things that dwell
In the deep pits of monster-breeding hell,
Or waste the earth, or terrify the heart ;
And all to which the fancy can impart
A momentary being, and be feared,
Around the circle of the tree appeared.

XIV

Mad elephants with riving tusks crasht by
With piercing trumpetings, and tost on high
Their threatening trunks, and mighty snakes uprose
In writhing columns ; bulls and buffaloes
Bellowed around him ; lions fierce for blood
Opened their cavernous jaws and pour'd a flood
Of roarings thro' the wood, till all around,
Except Tathágata, quaked at the sound.

XV

The Brahmas and the devas who had come
To see the Bódhisat prevail, grew dumb
With sorrow at that sight, and filled with dread,
And at the bruit thereof they turned and fled;
And on their steps the Sekras followed fast ;
But one remained behind, and to the last
Kept his sad eyes on him whose tranquil form
Was nowise shaken by that hellish storm.

XVI

And Kálaná, come with his tuneful throng
To sing Siddhártha's praises, stay'd not long
When he beheld that rout, but in dismay
Down thro' the solid earth he took his way
To his own Nága-world and cried : ' No doubt
Siddhártha's glory is clean blotted out !
Who can withstand great Mára ? ' So the chief
Of Manjaríka was consumed with grief.

XVII

But Bódhisat, altho' his friends had fled,
Was void of fear, for in his heart he said :
' Kinsman or friend or helper have I none :
Now therefore the good deeds that I have done
Shall be my kinsmen, and my righteousness
Shall keep me perfectly in this distress ;
Thus garrisoned I will not fear nor doubt,
Tho' Mára's minions compass me about.'

XVIII

Then Mára, burning with fierce rage to find
His hosts defeated, raised a mighty wind
To overturn him, but a gentle breeze
This seemed to him, although the forest trees
Were levelled round him ; then a whelming rain
Washt up the rocks beneath, but all in vain
Strove to o'erwhelm him ; then a shower of rocks
Fell round about him with far-sounding shocks.

XIX

But Bódhisat sat mid a trembling world
Untroubled. Then again at him was hurled
A shower of weapons, all to pierce him through :
All bootless labour. Then the Tempter drew
A shower of burning charcoal from the skies :
Storms of hot ashes, sand, and mud arise
To overwhelm him ; but these dreadful showers
Were turned to offerings of sweet-smelling flowers.

XX

Then darkness as of Egypt girt him round,
But in the midst the Bódhisat was found
With radiant countenance that nought could dim.
Then Mára, who now shook in every limb
With passion, shouted and prepared to cast
His great earth-cleaving discus, 'Now at last,'
Cried all beholders, 'Bódhisat must die
And all his glory and his fame go by.'

XXI

Then closed their eyes thro' fear, but oped them soon
When, calmly radiant as the glowing moon,
They saw the Bódhisat beneath his tree.
But Wasawártti, being grieved to see
His foe unhurt, cried in a wrathful tone,
'Oh thou usurper, get thee from my throne,
Or else be dragg'd from thence and swiftly hurl'd
Over the battlements of this high world !'

XXII

Free from all passion came the soft reply :
'From ages well-nigh numberless have I,
By strict observance of the precepts, sought
To gain this height, and truly I have wrought
All righteousness, and thou thyself for one
Hast borne me witness, and cried out, well done.
I sit hereon of right, and only smile
At all thy bootless insolence and guile.

XXIII

'Where are the witnesses to prove thy worth ?'
Then his arch-foe triumphantly stretcht forth
His hand and pointed to his mighty host,
Who, zealous to affirm his lying boast,
Cried like the roaring of tempestuous seas
On shingly shores, 'We are his witnesses !'
But he, 'I have my witnesses, and mine
Are far more worthy of belief than thine.

XXIV

‘ For mine are not alive, and truly then
I cannot give them bribes as men bribe men
And devas, devas : not from love or fear
Will they attest my words. Now shalt thou hear
Their testimony.’ Then he stretcht his hand
Towards the earth, and lo ! with deep and grand
And mighty thunderings, the quivering earth
Bore testimony to his matchless worth.

XXV

And then, as if indignant at the wrong
They sought to work him who had proved too strong
For all their efforts, lo ! the great earth rent,
And from the fiery inner hells were sent
Vast flames that rose and hissed among the clouds ;
Then that vast host, in panic-stricken crowds,
Fled for their lives, and Mára now fell flat
Upon his face before the Bódhisat,

XXVI

And owned his might and glory, and allowed
His full and faultless merit, and there vowed
To spread his glory thro’ the world, and prayed
For his forgiveness, being much afraid
That some dire punishment was nigh at hand
And then deserted wholly by his band
Fled homeward, and lamenting his disgrace,
For very shame he covered up his face.

XXVII

But sorely troubled, for the jests and jeers
Of his own devas now besieged his ears,
He hasted to escape their bitter mirth,
And came again with speed to this our earth
In traveller's guise, but grieved not for the sin—
The heinous crime, he had committed in
Opposing Bódhisat, who without fail
Must now so certainly and soon prevail.

XXVIII

But being ere long missed, his daughters three
With their divine eyes lookt thro' space to see
Where he had hidden, and their piercing eyes
Beheld him wandering in a traveller's guise,
And joining him, they cried : ' Grieve not, for we
Will conquer him who late has conquered thee,
And win the day which thou with all thy host,
By far less powerful, have wholly lost.'

XXIX

But Mára, knowing well how all must end,
Forewarned them ; but they cried, ' None may contend
Prevailingly against us,' and then flew
Towards the Bo-tree with intent to woo
The prince from virtue. Having then transformed
Themselves into six hundred maids, they swarmed
Around him, each one of voluptuous mien,
And each one beautiful as any queen.

XXX

And all appeared apparelled in such wise,
That Bódhisat, who had just raised his eyes
To view them, cast them down again with speed,
Reflecting in his heart, ' Now have I need
Of all my constancy, lest that a fire
Flame in my heart, in which all ill desire
Is near unto its death : this is my last
And worst temptation, shall I not stand fast ? '

XXXI

With amorous wiles, that no one could withstand
Except a Bódhisat, that wanton band
Sought his undoing, each one trying hard
To win a glance from him. But no regard
Paid he to aught they did, nor ever raised
His eyes a moment. Then the devas praised
His godlike beauty, and thus outspake one—
' Why dost thou tarry here so long alone ? '

XXXII

' Where is thy queen, that thou dost sit apart ?
Hath some love-quarrel grieved thy loving heart ?
Perchance thy thoughts to other loves have stray'd,
And now thou keepest tryst for some fair maid ;
Lo, we are many, be thou then sufficed ;
Forget thy queen, if such thou hast—thy tryst,
If such thou keepest.' No word could they win,
He would not parley with the pleasant sin.

XXXIII

'O thou,' they cried, 'art colder than the snow
On Himalaya ; 'twas not always so ;
Bethink thee, thou wert eager once to seek
The good thou now refusest ; speak, oh speak !
Why keep thy lonely eminence? Come down !
Are we not beautiful and all thine own,
And dying for the love of thee? Oh save
Our blooming beauty from the joyless grave !

XXXIV

He answered not a word, but inly thought,
'Love is the foe of prudence, and hath wrought
Much harm to men, and turned the wise astray
From wisdom, and from following the way
That leads to peace.' And now perceiving that
'Twas vain to tempt the virtuous Bódhisat,
They vanished, and once more he was alone,
And breathed more freely after they had gone.

XXXV

By this the day had drawn unto a close,
And all night's lamps were lit. But now uprose
For him a wondrous light exceeding far
The light of planet or of moon or star ;
For in the first watch darkness roll'd aside,
The curtains of the past were opened wide,
He gained the knowledge of his former births
And all his wanderings thro' the heavens and earths.

XXXVI

And at the second watch he sent his gaze
 Thro' all the universe, and with amaze
 And grief beheld the many ills whereto
 All sentient things are subject : piercing thro'
 Life's mysteries next watch, clear-eyed he saw
 The causes of existence and the law
 Of Repetition, and then learnt how best
 He might the current of that stream arrest.

XXXVII

And thus became a Buddha, and thereon
 He spake these words, while in his face there shone
 Exceeding joy : ' Thro' an eternity
 Of past existences, unblest, have I
 Made pilgrimage and borne a weary load,
 Seeking the Fashioner of this abode ;
 But now, O Framer of this tenement,
 I have beheld thee, and I am content.

XXXVIII

' No more shalt thou build up a house for me :
 Behold, thy frames are broken down ! and see,
 Is not thy roof-pole shattered? all desire
 Is now extinguisht: no more shall that fire
 Burn in my bosom, binding me to earth :
 Henceforth for me there is no other birth.'
 Thus runs the story I have not eschewed,
 The legend bent on glorifying Boodh.

XXXIX

But I, who am perchance too prone to stray
From off the highroad and content to stay
Among the flowery lanes which do not lack
Enticing greenness, now will get me back.
Know then that Sakya in a thoughtful mood
Now watcht the setting sun—the last that should
Behold him there, and vainly strove to read
The unknown future of his new-formed creed.

XL

‘Enough,’ he murmured, ‘I have counted all
The risk and cost, and now, whate’er befall,
Upon the morrow I will get me forth,
And prove if there indeed be any worth
In me or in my doctrines.’ But that night
Sleep fled his eyelids, so he longed for light
That he might rise and go upon his way,
And in this mood he waited for the day ;

XLI

And meditating on his work he thought :
‘I have not pandered to men’s lusts, nor sought
Mine own aggrandisement, except it be
For other men’s advantage. Now for me
There is a future ; is it one of scorn,
And cursing of the day when I was born,
And of the womb that held me till the birth ?
And utter loathing throughout all the earth ?

XLII

‘ Or shall men call me blessèd ? Shall my name
Grow mighty in the earth, until my fame
Go out into far lands, till I become
A god at whose deep words the wise grow dumb,
And reverent multitudes bow down with awe ?
I know not, and perchance if I foresaw,
My heart might be too proud or hands too weak
For all the great things I must do and speak.

XLIII

‘ But this I know, that at the best for me
There is a life of hard hypocrisy,
And keeping of a secret none may know,
And hiding of hard truths I dare not show,
Lest all my labour be for ever lost.
O loveless solitude ! O chilling frost
Of isolation, thus to live apart
And hide my knowledge ever in my heart !

XLIV

‘ Why is my heart sad ? what tho’ I have built
On solemn falsehoods ? is there any guilt
When no God liveth ? surely no man could
Call that thing evil which produces good !
I but employ, and think it not unmeet,
A kindly guile, a merciful deceit,
To draw men on to virtue which is kin
To happiness ; and where, then, is my sin ?

XLV

‘ Moreover, since the foot of death stamps out
The life of man for ever, whatso doubt
My followers may have of me, none shall
Discover my great secret, they shall fall
Into dark nothingness and never rise
To prove me a deceiver. When man dies,
His knowledge with himself is wholly gone.
So shall my doctrine undisturb’d live on.’

XLVI

So on this wise he mused as one by one
The slow hours passed. At last the unseen sun
Sent forth his heralds, and the first faint gleams
Of Dawn awakened him from mighty dreams
That lackt but time to make them true ; yet still
He lingered for a little space until
The night retreated westward, and the day
Drove to their dens the evil beasts of prey.

XLVII

The Sungod rises and the glory hastes
Over old Sinim and the Tatar wastes :
See how it lingers lovingly upon
That garden of the Lord far-famed Ceylon !
And dyes the snows that everlastingly
Blanch Himalaya ! Even the frozen sea
Feels somewhat of those beams that without rest
Sweep on to waken all the slumbering West.

XLVIII

Now when he saw the sun he rose and went
 Upon his way, firm in his great intent ;
 Revolving many things—and surely now
 Had all above, around him, and below,
 But had the cunning of a human tongue,
 And known his purpose, they would thus have sung,
 Making that forest one triumphal arch :
 ‘Go forth, O Buddha, on thy conquering march !

XLIX

‘We know thy worth and bless thee, waiting not
 Till men acknowledge thee, and thou hast got
 Man’s praise and worship—we wait not till then.
 Go forth, O thou most loving of all men !
 Go forth and prosper ! Thou shalt surely win
 The grateful love of human hearts ; therein
 We know thou lookest for thy chief reward,
 O mild destroyer of the knife and sword !

L

‘Tho’ all the wicked of the world assail
 Thee and thy doctrines, yet shall both prevail.
 Thou hast remembered those whom all forget
 Or lightly think of : thou hast nobly set
 Thyself to be the champion of the weak :
 Now shall thy creed, tho’ merciful and meek,
 Be mightier than great armies : all who rest
 Beneath its shadow shall be counted blest.’

LI

Then coming to the open lands, he stood
Awhile upon the margin of that wood,
The birthplace of that mighty creed which now
He must go forth and preach, not knowing how
Men would receive it : but he stood not long,
For hope rose up within him, and made strong
His faltering spirit : resolutely then
He set his face toward the homes of men.

CANTO X.

I

THINK not the work he goeth forth to do
A short work or an easy : thereunto
Must he give his whole strength, and all his days,
And all his wisdom : and in many ways
Must he be tried, and have but little ease ;
For he has foes to battle with, and these
Both strong and many : shall they not defend
Their old monopolies unto the end ?

II

With utmost rigour throughout all that land
The Brahman's faith ruled. With a heavy hand
The Brahman lorded it, and was not slack
To show his power, neither did he lack
The pride and insolence that spring from long
And undisturbed possession : being strong
He had forgotten wisdom, and filled up
For his own drinking a most bitter cup.

III

The proud must learn by lowliness, the strong
Be taught by weakness. These men ruled by wrong,
And through men's ignorance and lusts and fears :
Not thus may empires lengthen out their years.
A spiritual tyranny was theirs—
A despotism in the soul's affairs ;
Between the awful gods and men they stood,
The sole dispensers of all saving good.

IV

'To us alone,' they cried, 'is given the key
Of knowledge and of mysteries : and we
Alone can read aright the sacred books.
Mad and accursèd is the man that looks
Without our aid to serve the jealous gods.
'Tis we alone can regulate the modes
Of all your worship : hateful in their sight
Are all who will not worship them aright.

V

' For such are grievous punishments ordained,
Yet, by the merit of our prayers restrained,
They will forego their wrath ; and oftentimes
Have we held back their judgment on your crimes
Done ignorantly, yet which we knew well
Deserved the punishment of death or hell.
Presume not then, but seeing things are thus,
Leave all the guiding of your souls to us.'

VI

So spake these tyrants of men's consciences ;
And so they acted, and received their fees
Of homage and a more substantial gain,
But little love ; nay, some could scarce refrain
From open hate, but fear was in their heart ;
So they dissembled, playing well their part,
And all the more their wrath burned on within
Well-loved and cherisht like some secret sin.

VII

Now ill-contented with their fathers' creed,
And with their simple worship, they must need
Invent gods numberless ; and some hereof
Were mighty heroes who had sinned enough
To make them famous after they were dead ;
And some were powers of Nature, and were bred
Of ignorance or fear, or fancied sights,
And some were worshipt with obscenest rites.

VIII

And some were demon-gods : the wrath of these
With bloody offerings did men appease,
And honoured with foul worship, lest they should
Afflict men with sore plagues. These wrought no good,
But only evil, so men fear'd their power,
But gave them no true reverence ; in the hour
Of sorrow, and the recklessness it brought,
They curst them bitterly in word and thought.

IX

Men's minds were darkened, and none thought they could,
By shunning evil and by doing good,
Obtain release from what they all deplored—
Existence, and attain the great reward—
Absorption into Brahm ; nay, but they held
That God's good work was evil, and they quelled
The voice of nature crying thro' the heart,
And slew compassion with a spiteful dart.

X

They said : ' We will afflict ourselves : we will
Torment the flesh, which is the seat of ill ;
So the pure spirit may obtain release,
And find at last in Brahm eternal peace.'
Bethink ye of the gilded car that late,
Amid infernal clamour, rolled its weight
Across the bodies of live devotees :
Reflect ye on the sufferings of these.

XI

Think of the widow struggling on the pyre
Of her dead husband ; of the priest-lit fire,
And of their shoutings as they bid her die
Contentedly to meet her lord on high ;
And of the wretches that still limp or crawl
Their weary pilgrim journeys ; and of all
Who drown themselves in Ganges ; and the host
Of those who make their penances their boast.

XII

Caste reigned throughout the land, a power of ill,
Dividing those whose lot it was to till
From those who traded ; and the men who fought
From both the former, and the priests who taught
The worship of the gods : these latter seemed
As gods in their own eyes, and proudly deemed
The others were but fashioned to conduce
To their advantage and especial use.

XIII

The conquering Aryans, when they had subdued
The ancient tribes, condemned to servitude
All spared in warfare ; and to these they gave
The name of Sudra, (reckoned worse than slave,)
And holding them unclean, they shut them out
From all their worship, which they fenced about
With penalties of death, and all who dared
To read their sacred books a like fate shared.

XIV

So through the centuries each kept his place,
And still the fairer ruled the darker race.
Moreover, now the haughty Brahman said :
' When Brahma made men, we sprang from his head ;
But thou, vile Sudra, sprangest from his feet,
And being lowest, it is only meet
We tread thee underfoot : thou hast no part,
Nor lot with us, thou black in skin and heart.

XV

So these lived on, enduring many ills.
Hear what the law said : ' Whosoever kills
A sacred monkey, shall most surely die :
Who slays a Sudra, if he wills, may buy
Forgiveness at a few pence at the most.'
So no man cared for them: but now, ye lost
And ye down-trodden ones, be of good cheer,
For your deliverer is drawing near.

XVI

To be the helper of the poor and weak,
The refuge of the outcast ; and to speak
The words of love and brotherhood to those
Who, spurned by all men, counted all men foes ;
To bless with tenderness all things that live ;
To purge away uncleanness, and to give
White purity ; and with a nobler creed,
Still the deep cravings of unspoken need ;

XVII

This is the work he goeth forth to do ;
A great work, and a long work, thereunto
He bringeth all the lore of heart and brain,
And deep experience : shall he toil in vain ?
Shall men receive him saying: ' Here is yet
Another dreamer ; let us go and get
Somewhat that may prove matter for our mirth,
Because a dull place truly is this earth ?'

XVIII

Or shall indifference, which is worse to bear
Than open hatred, greet him with a stare
In old Benares? Well, let them smile or frown,
He hasteth on towards that ancient town,
And many and great thoughts are in his heart.
He will be strong to play his mighty part
In this world's drama, and win great applause ;
The Orient shall yet receive his laws.

XIX

As Moslems look on Mecca, and the Jew
Looks on fair Salem, so the proud Hindoo
Looks on this sacred city of his sires,
And, oftener than his feet, go his desires
In loving pilgrimage thereto ; for all
Must have their holy places. Fair and tall
Arose its temples rich with gems and gold,
And at its feet the sacred river roll'd.

XX

Here Brahman learning had its seat ; herein
Men found a quick remission of all sin,
And merit that would help them in the day
Of their affliction, and when far away
In common places of the earth. Its fame
Was great throughout that land, and so men came
In multitudes, and humbly, as was meet,
Sat down as learners at its wise men's feet.

XXI

O thou wise Buddha, be not overbold :
Is not this far-famed city the stronghold
Of Brahman custom and of Brahman faith ?
Will not men say thou goest to thy death ?
But he went on and reached the gates at last,
And calmly thro' the crowded streets he pass'd,
Unknown by any, for few men can see
How great the stranger in their midst may be.

XXII

And now the Buddha, after due repose,
All being ready for his work, arose
And pass'd along the streets, and took his stand
Where men were many. Now on either hand
Were rows of hawkers bawling out their wares,
And withered mendicants, who droned their prayers
And howled for alms to every passer by,
And bared their bodies to the loathing eye.

XXIII

So when men saw a noble-looking man
Stand forth to speak, from every side they ran
To see him or to hear him ; and the crowd
Was nowise lessened as he cried aloud :
' Come Brahman, and come Sudra, yea come all
Who have been born of women free or thrall ;
My doctrine is for all beneath the sun,
And my salvation is denied to none.'

XXIV

Then love and wonder fell upon the throng,
For pleasant as the sound of some sweet song,
And deep as oracles the gods give forth,
Seemed all his words, now deemed of greater worth
Than all the wisdom of the sacred books ;
More musical too than the voice of brooks
To those who travel in a thirsty land,
And grand as solemn thunderings are grand.

XXV

And strong men trembled, and deep sighs arose
From erewhile happy hearts, and tears from those
In whom the fount of tears had long been dry.
Now as he ended all his words, his eye
Fell on five men that, struggling with the crowd,
Strove hard to reach him ; and these cried aloud,
' Hail master ! ' then ere long before him stood
His old companions in the late-left wood.

XXVI

And crying, ' Be not very wroth with us
That in our ignorance we chid thee thus,'
They did him homage ; but the Boodh made haste
And reacht his arms towards them and embraced
Each in his turn, and answered : ' Ye have done
Me no unkindness; anger have I none,
But only love, because of your kind ways
When we abode together in past days.

XXVII

‘ But now, what think ye of the words that late
Fell from these lips ? seemed they the words of fate
Or but the fables that wise men invent ? ’
Then these all answered him with one consent :
‘ Thou hast the wisdom of the gods, and none
Have ever taught us like as thou hast done ;
O make us thy disciples, and we will
Be thy staunch followers thro’ good and ill.’

XXVIII

The Buddha answered : ‘ Be it so. O men,
Ye are the first-fruits of my harvest.’ Then
These turned them to the crowd that saw and heard
Their greetings with amazement, with this word—
‘ We are his witnesses ; ’ then told their tale.
Whereafter many joined them, crying : ‘ Hail,
O master ! we will also follow thee,
For thou art worthy as all eyes may see.’

XXIX

So separating, these with tongues aflame,
Went thro’ the city, spreading wide his fame.
But many doubted of this novel creed :
Yet in the hearts of most was sown the seed
Of much debating ; while they all confest
A goodlier teacher never taught—a test
Wise men will smile at, yet how far it went :
Are not too many with the same content ?

XXX

Men deemed the hours passed but with sluggard pace
Till they should hear the voice and see the face
Of him who late was prince, but now instead
Dependent on men's charity for bread,
And teacher of a creed that no man knew,
Or all men had forgotten. Not a few
Who heard him scofft, but others lay awake
That night and pondered on the words he spake.

XXXI

So on the morrow in the noisy street
Did many wait his coming ; and his feet
Delaying not, they soon beheld him come.
Not without welcome came he, if the hum
And eager looks that followed thereupon
Be counted such ; nor, as awhile ago,
A lonely stranger ; for with new-born pride
His new disciples followed on each side.

XXXII

Excitedly from every side men ran
To hear the preaching of the goodly man.
Ascetics thronging round to hear his word,
Thronged not less eagerly whenas they heard
A strong voice crying : ' O ye men of prayer,
Have ye no pity on yourselves ? ye wear
Your lives out with hard penance. Lo ! this day
I will reveal to you a better way.'

XXXIII

Then spake he words of kindness and power ;
And not a few who heard him, from that hour
Ceast their austerities ; but some grieved sore
Since they should bear about for evermore,
In mangled body or in withered limb,
The proofs of their old folly: yet to him
Who taught them wisdom, all their change confest,
And sued for fellowship among the rest.

XXXIV

But step by step I may no more trace out
The journey of his life ; for fogs of doubt
Now deepen round him, and his words and ways.
His friends have wrapt him in a mist of praise
That none may see thro'. Two score and five years
He lives and labours, and thro' all, appears
A deity or wonder-working saint,
And all the human element grows faint.

XXXV

But this we know, that long time without scath
He taught within that city ; and his faith
Had great acceptance with the common folk,
Who, gall'd and burdened with the Brahman's yoke,
Hailed him as their deliverer : likewise
Came men that seem'd not fools in their own eyes
Nor in the eyes of others ; and all these
Became his followers. So by degrees

XXXVI

He gat a goodly following ; and then
From out their number choosing threescore men,
He sent them forth to preach, and said : ‘ Go ye,
Proclaim my doctrines thro’ the land, and see
Ye do it not with insolence or pride :
Ye have no need of such when on your side
Are truth and right : give no man cause to say,
“ These preach good tidings in an evil way.”

XXXVII

‘ All my ascetics shall be loved not feared.
Cry ye to all, “ A Buddha hath appeared.”
And whatsoever I have taught you, show.
Proclaim the precepts, and the paths. Ye know
The four great truths, the bases of my creed.’
So these went each his way, and, giving heed
To his commands, they prospered. Thus he plann’d
To spread his doctrines throughout all that land.

XXXVIII

Thereafter king Bimsára, erst his friend,
Became his convert ; and unto the end
Continued stedfast. Shielded by his arm,
The young faith prospered. Not without alarm
Its followers beheld the old king die,
Slain by his son, long time the bad ally
Of those who loved not Buddha, their great sage,
Now come unto a venerable age.

XXXIX

But this same monarch, having reacht the throne,
Repented of his deeds ; and wiser grown,
Delay'd not to dismiss his former friends ;
And by well doing strove to make amends
For all the evil that his hands had done ;
And gat great fame thereby, for men said, ' None
Of those still subject to the ills of birth
Is like Ajásat : laud ye well his worth.'

XL

Yet for his many sins, the legends tell,
This monarch when he died was born in hell ;
And there for ages must he yet bemoan
His former folly. It is also shown
How that the brother of his former wife,
Who many times had sought the Buddha's life,
And made a rent among his priests, at last
Down into the Escapeless hell was cast.

XLI

They also tell us that when years had flown,
The Buddha came unto his native town,
And lookt once more upon his friends and kin.
And many were made glad thereby, for in
The hearts of many love had not grown cool
Through his long absence. Many eyes were full
Of tears as they beheld him once again,
And of his blessing many hearts were fain.

XLII

The king believed on him, as did his wife
 Yasódhará, who led a widowed life,
 (Two years before her lord she found release,
 And saw the City where alone is peace) ;
 And she who nursed him when a little one—
 Prajápati, and Ráhula his son,
 Whom he had never seen since that dark night
 When like a thief he fled in hurried flight.

XLIII

Proclaiming openly, as men gave heed,
 And fearlessly thro' all, his gentle creed ;
 And teaching doctrines hitherto unknown,
 The great ascetic passed from town to town,
 Contending with men's bigotry and doubt.
 Thus lived he henceforth through a life stretcht out
 Beyond the wonted measure of man's days.
 A weary man, he trod the dusty ways ;

XLIV

A lonely man at heart, he lived, for tho'
 Begirt by followers, he dared not show
 His bitter secret : and he lived, be sure,
 Not unassailed by slander, tho' most pure ;
 Nor unopposed by priests ; nor unwithstood
 By rival sects, and men whose highest good
 Was their own gain ; and oftentimes hard pusht
 By the proud followers of the great Zerdusht.

XLV

Thus all the long years of his life went by :
And it is told, that when he came to die,
He called his followers, and calmly said :
' O ye ascetics whom I long have led
And taught and tended ; I draw near my rest :
Nirvána waits me, and this tranquil breast
Is filling with the calm that ne'er shall cease
Within the City and the Home of Peace.

XLVI

' And now, O friends, if ye have any doubt
Of aught that I have taught you, speak ye out ;
Lest after I have ceast to be ye say,
" Would we had askt him ere he passed away
Concerning this !" speak, for I will not chide
No matter what ye ask.' But none replied,
For no man doubted. ' Followers beloved,
Have ye no doubts ?' he cried, ' to be removed ?

XLVII

' Then I depart, and cheerfully, because
Nirvána waits me. Guard ye well my laws.
My life is ended and my work is done.
The elements of the all-seeing One
Shall pass away, but still my truth shall live.'
And so he died, and loudly did men grieve.
So, peacefully and in a good old age
And girt by followers, died the mighty sage :

XLVIII

Died, and attained unto the rest he sought,
Ev'n nothingness ; for thereunto are brought
All living things whose life is in their breath ;
For man has no pre-eminence in death
Above the creatures which he slays for food,
Or yokes for labour, or in ruthless mood
Hunts for his pastime ; over all their race
He lords it only for a little space.

XLIX

Dust of the dust which now he proudly spurns
Beneath his feet, at death he but returns
To his old elements : say not he springs
Heavenward at death, and with his new-found wings
Beats up the azure of his native sky
To take his place among the gods on high,
And dwell of right, a god among his peers
Throughout eternity's untroubled years.

L

Death is no solver of life's mysteries,
Nor yet a teacher that makes all men wise.
Call him the Lord of Silence and of Gloom,
And Keeper of the strong gates of the tomb,
And Sunderer of hearts. A noise of groans
Heralds his coming, and behind him moans
A wind of sighs, and sounds of falling tears
And rending garments ever fill his ears.

LI

Yet shall the dead arise—the slumberers wake,
And God who now unmaketh shall remake,
And build again the fallen and destroyed ;
So ancient Hades shall become a void.
All shall have judgment and a meet reward,
In life eternal or in death abhorr'd :
Then, Buddha, shalt thou rise from thy long rest
And take the recompense He deemeth best.

LII

Guide of innumerable hosts of whom
Thou never dreamedst, what shall be thy doom
When God shall judge thee on the judgment day ?
Mild lord of teeming millions whose wide sway
Is firmer than a despot's, thou hast wrought
A work beyond the measurement of thought ;
Shall not the very angels hold their breath
When God recalls thee from the void of death ?

LIII

They wrapt the dead man in the finest cloth,
And on a pile of sandal wood, tho' loth,
They placed the body ; and thereover poured
The sacred oil (now all the pile was stored
With fragrant spices); and ere long the fire
Consumed the whole, and by degrees the pyre
Burnt down and left the Buddha but a name,
And a few bones to keep alive the same ;

LIV

And these they gathered up with reverent care,
For precious in the eyes of all they were,
And coveted and quarrell'd for by kings,
Who deeming them most precious of all things,
Enshrined them in rich dá gobas and topes
And stately temples, saying, ' Let these props
Of all our good be guarded well alway.'
Have they not guarded them unto this day?

CANTO XI.

I

Tho' well adapted to the craving need
Of all the children of the East, this creed
Might yet have tarried where it had its birth,
Nor wandered to the far ends of the earth,
Had not Asóka risen. This great king
Became a convert ; when a sheltering wing
He spread thereover, and with zealous hand
Made haste to plant it throughout all his land.

II

For being of low caste, this monarch thought :
' Tho' mightily my sires and I have wrought,
And though my rule be prosperous and just,
It is unstable. I can put no trust
In these proud Brahmans ; gladly ere the morn
They would dethrone me, for that I, low born,
And one who at their feet should humbly fall,
Do notwithstanding lord it o'er them all.'

III

Moreover it may be that he perceived
The beauty of the precepts, and believed
The teachings of the sage, and set apart
At least some little portion of his heart
For that mild faith, because his heart was moved
With love and pity, by the which he proved
The error of all those who say, 'Such things
Can have no lodgment in the breasts of kings.'

IV

Howe'er it be, the faith that until then
Had won acceptance for the most with men
Not of the number of the rich and great,
Was now acknowledged as the creed of state,
And spread and prospered throughout all that land ;
And in pursuance of the king's command
Rich topes and temples rose on every side,
And men went forth to spread it far and wide.

V

But not with arguments of sword and flame
Did this man spread his creed—would that the same
Were true of nations of the prouder West !
Laud him therefor, and let it be confest
That knowledge is not wisdom, nor always
Leads thereunto ; and let that man have praise
Who can unite them. Still, dumb stones reveal
This wise king's wisdom, tenderness, and zeal.

VI

So from Magadha in the north, where long
It found a safe asylum waxing strong,
It wandered out towards the north, and there
Passed into Cashmere : men who dwelt elsewhere
Deemed this a paradise, but those therein
Thought it not free from vanity and sin,
And toil and strife and death ; so fair and good
In their sad eyes appeared the rest of Boodh.

VII

So these received it with a ready mind.
It crossed the Indus, there again to find
Warm welcome in Cabool ; and still it kept
Upon its conquering northward way, and leapt
The barriers of Hindoo Koosh, and pass'd
Along the Oxus, and beheld at last
The shores of Aral, and triumphantly
It gazed out westward o'er the Caspian Sea.

VIII

No more the Bactrian adored the sun,
But served a God more near of kin, and one
More pitiful and worthy of his love
Than that fierce deity that flamed above,
An object rather of his hate and dread :
With his hot beams upon his aching head,
How could he praise him ? Or, with parching mouth,
How could he bless him in the months of drouth ?

IX

It found a home among the Kirghese hordes :
These in their dwellings, whereof stakes and cords
Are the foundations, made a welcome guest
Of him who promist them eternal rest ;
And in their shifting homes they learned to sigh
For an abiding place far up on high,
Where they no more should wander to and fro,
Thro' summer's drought and winter's chilling snow.

X

But when as with an overturning flood
The waves of Arab conquest, fringed with blood,
Broke on these lands, they wholly washed away
Tathágata's mild faith ; so at this day
The Crescent gleams on minaret and dome
In cities Gaútama once made his home.
Not all are faithful to their ancient Lord,
When foes like Islam argue with the sword.

XI

It wandered eastward till the far Man-choo
Heard of the Venerable One, and grew
A lover of that sage ; and on its road
To that far land in lessening waves it flowed
Towards the north, throughout the vast extent
Of Russia's mighty prison land ; and sent
Sramana's name to all the dwellers in
The wildernesses of the Lapp and Finn.

•

XII

The Central Land received the precepts thus :
The warriors of the monarch glorious
Above all kings had conquered, and possess
Themselves of trophies ; and among the rest
A golden image of the Boodh ; but none
Could tell the great king of that glorious one.
The wisest only knew from whence it came,
And diversely did these pronounce its name.

XIII

That night the monarch, lying on his bed,
Saw in the visions of his royal head
A golden image, and the face thereof
Was as a god's ; the broad brows were not rough
With wrinkles, as in those who still must wage
A war with sorrow, sickness, and old age,
And yet be worsted in the bitter end.
Then cried the image, ' Buddha bids thee send

XIV

' To regions westward where the great suns die,
To seek for books and images, whereby
Thou mayest gain the knowledge thou dost lack.'
So waking up from sleep, he was not slack
In his obedience to that command ;
For, laden with rich gifts, a goodly band
Soon left the city at the king's behest,
And turned their feet towards the far off west.

XV

And these well-sped, brought back a goodly store
Of books and images, and, what was more,
Men wise to teach the new-found faith ; and so
The Central Land received the faith of Foh ;
And as the years rolled on it grew to be
A rival to the faiths of Con-foo-tsee
And Lao-tsee, and passing thence it won
The Kingdom of the Birthplace of the Sun.

XVI

And travelling south, and prospering as it went,
It won Tonkéen, and Cochin China bent
The knee to Buddha. Anam owned his might,
Camboge and Laos hailed his welcome light,
As also did the land that fears the frown
Of him who lords it in the floating town,
And guards the great white elephants with care.
So palm-girt dá gobas rose everywhere.

XVII

It set its face towards the south, and pass'd
Along Malayan lands, and won at last
Sumatra, and subdued the Javanese.
Isles strewn like pearls about the tropic seas
Received the law ; but these have turned aside,
And now men serve with insolence and pride
God and the Prophet, and heap scorn on those
Who still serve Buddha, yea, and count them foes.

XVIII

Bleak Tibet, tho' delaying long, at last
Acknowledged Buddha; so from thence it pass'd
Along the deathful ways whereof men tell,
And reacht the melancholy plains where dwell
The Mongol shepherds ; these amid their herds
Gave ready hearing to the Lama's words:
And so it spread and filled from pass to pass
The wildernesses of the Land of Grass.

XIX

The land wherein its founder lived and died
It ruled for centuries, while tide on tide
Of pilgrims flockt into that holy land.
At length the Brahman gained the upper hand.
Then Buddhists, mindful of the master's word,
And all unskilled at handling of the sword,
Driven out, went forth to endless banishment,
And spread their doctrines wheresoe'er they went.

XX

And thus it triumpht, tho' it loathed the sword
That truer faiths have taught with, and abhorr'd
All persecution and harsh violence,
Nor used such even in its own defence.
It cursed and banished none who deemed it good
To bow before another lord than Boodh.
It has no martyrs underneath the throne,
It prospered thro' Benevolence alone.

XXI

So Buddha's name became a mighty power
Throughout great empires. Even to this hour,
Tho' well nigh banished from its native land,
It rules elsewhere, and with a mighty hand.
Whose children's children shall behold it die?
Still Tibet worships Boodh as God Most High,
And grows not weary of a faith that deals
With living Buddhas, and with praying wheels.

XXII

Thereof is Lanka still a citadel ;
Amid her sorrows she has guarded well
The faith Mahinda taught her in old days :
Still Irawaddy hears great Jina's praise
In all her course ; and Menam still o'erflows
And floods the rice-fields and the lands of those
Who serve Phra Kodom ; still the great Mekong,
That mighty and swift river, roars along

XXIII

Thro' regions where the nations still revere
Great Boodh, to whom they offer year by year
The first fruits of the field and of the flock ;
And old Cathay still wears the ancient yoke,
And yellow-vested bonzes bending low
Present their prayers and offerings to Foh,
And call him Lord ; howbeit these now feel
But little of the ancient love and zeal.

XXIV

And westward where the Tycoon rules, men still
Adore the Man god, who for good and ill
Maintains his empire in that pleasant land
Despite the old gods ; and the bonze's hand
Still swings the censer in fair temples girt
By groves and gardens ; still his lips assert,
As heretofore, from weary age to age,
The matchless glories of the mighty sage.

XXV

And still the dwellings of the Tatar hordes
Display the images of Boodh : the swords
That filled the earth with terror and the East
With desolation and with death, nor ceast
Until the empires of the Orient
Became their spoils, are sheatht, or only bent
Against the throats of cattle : wild of mood,
Yet peaceable withal, these all serve Boodh.

XXVI

And everywhere throughout these lands may still
Be seen the Buddha's images : they fill
The topes and temples : they are gilt and gold,
Cut in the living rock, formed in the mould,
Framed of smooth ivory, or carved in wood ;
Some wondrous works of art, some coarse and rude,
Some of colossal magnitude, and some
Worn on the person or kept in the home.

XXVII

Some lie recumbent, and some sit ; some stand,
But most are seated cross-legg'd with one hand
Laid in the lap, the other on the knee :
But howsoever diverse they may be
In other matters, in them all we trace
Divinest calm writ plainly on each face ;
And quietude and rest in form and limb :
Such are the statues they have made to him.

XXVIII

No sorrow mars his visage ; sitting calm
Amid fair groves of tamarind and palm,
He seems a part of Nature : calm as deep
As of the ancient hills, which know not sleep,
Yet seem for ever in a dreamful rest,
Seems fallen upon him : in that tranquil breast
Is nothing of life's toil and feverous fire ;
He has attained unto his whole desire.

CANTO XII.

I

BUT now before I make an end of all
The facts and fables of this tale, and fall
To silence, I will show what Boodh made known,
Or what some others of his faith have shown,
About the founding of the worlds ; and how
They rise from emptiness and night, and grow
In fruitfulness and beauty, and at last
Sink into ruin terrible and vast,

II

And perish wholly ; while instead thereof
Rise other worlds as fair : but let none scoff ;
Let all inclined to cavil and to rail
Pass to the next division of this tale :
But thou that seekest truth and art not blind,
If thou miss truth herein, thou mayest find
At least some profit. So be not aggrieved ;
Learn what for ages millions have believed.

III

The worlds are many as the drops of dew,
Or blades of grass, or as the sands that strew
The floors of deserts, oceans, lakes and seas ;
And countless also as the leaves of trees,
Or particles of dust in times of drought,
Or drops of water, if one measured out
The waters of the world, or grains of corn,
Or flakes of snow by winter winds down borne.

IV

And yet the sum of them is fully known
To all the Buddhas, but to these alone:
As also is the secret of that might
By which, far swifter than a flash of light,
They pass from world to world ; their wit and power,
And how man's character lives in the hour
When he himself ends, having run his course,
An indestructible, creative force.

V

And how the universe at first arose :
Concerning this the Buddha said to those
Who would have askt him : ' Seek ye not to learn
About this hidden thing ; but rather turn
Your thoughts to matters suited to your state.
Know only that the universe is great
Beyond your thought ; and that it ever was
And ever will be : ask ye not its cause.'

VI

The systems and the worlds, like men, alas,
Have their appointed times: they change and pass,
Are brought to nothingness, and then renewed
In pristine beauty. Mid no quietude
As of a just man's death do these decay ;
Nor by slow forces are they worn away :
By fierce destruction they are brought to nought,
And leave a being only in man's thought.

VII

Fire, wind, and water are the instruments
Of their destruction ; and these great events
Fall in the fashion I will now relate.
The ruler Maha Brahma, good and great,
Lord of a Brahma-world, yet mindful still
Of all the other worlds, of his free will
And pity into all those worlds doth send
To warn men duly of the awful end.

VIII

But I must pause a little space, altho'
Amidst of mighty changes, till I show
This being's tenderness ; for reigning in
The highest Brahma-world, he sees that sin
And pain and sorrow, tho' they come not there,
Abound, alas, in other worlds that fare
Less happily ; so in his heart there springs
Perpetual pity for all sentient things.

IX

Continually in his tranquil breast
These wishes rise, 'May all become possest
Of merit great as mine is and obtain
A like reward ;' and, 'May all beings gain
Deliv'rance from the four hells and once more
Taste happiness. May it be long before
Change vex the dwellers in all worlds like mine,'
And, 'May no being unrewarded pine.'

X

So out of pity pure and unalloy'd
To all the worlds that are to be destroyed
He sends a faithful deva. Now the same
Is drest in garments coloured like a flame.
With streaming eyes and with disordered hair,
And face and form and aspect that all bear
The signs of unfeigned trouble and sore grief,
He does the bidding of his worthy chief.

XI

From world to world he goes and in all ears
Sounds this dread message : 'In so many years
This present age shall have an end, and then
So many worlds of devas, gods and men,
And all therein, shall be destroyed by fire.
Now, lest ye share this ruin great and dire,
Amend your ways or this devouring woe
May prove but prelude to a worse below.

XII

‘ Assist your parents, and to all who claim
Respect or reverence, haste to yield the same.
Avoid the five sins : keep the five commands :
And let no evil soil your hearts or hands,
Nor yet your lips—Flee sin in every shape,
So from this evil ye may all escape.
Tell this your children, and let them tell theirs,
Lest it should fall upon you unawares.’

XIII

Then men and devas feel unfeignèd fear :
And trembling, to the deva they draw near
And ask him, saying, ‘ How hast thou obtained
This awful knowledge ? Say now hast thou gained
The same by thine own wisdom ? or now did
Another teach thee ? for this has been hid
From men whom hereto we have counted wise.’
Whereto the deva soberly replies :

XIV

‘ O questioners, not of mine own accord
Come I proclaiming this unwelcome word ;
By Maha Brahma am I hither sent.
Yet, since it is his will, I am content
To be his messenger, altho’ this prove
A work wherein I win but little love ;
Nay, gibes and scoffings and hard words from some,
And many sorrows for the woes to come.’

XV

So these obey the deva's word and warn
Their children, and they theirs ; and such are born
In worlds that perish not by that fierce flame.
But men are many and not all the same ;
And while some heed, some others only mock,
And make this faithful one a laughing stock,
And jest at his grave face, and that red robe
That shadows forth the burning of the globe.

XVI

They say moreover, ' How can this thing be ?
Can fire lick up the waters of the sea ?
Or drain the streams, or eat the rocky earth ?
This thing is matter for a wise man's mirth.
Go frighten women and weak-minded men :
We've heard the like of this before, and then
We cried, " An old wife's fable ! " And know thou
We cannot think much better of it now.'

XVII

So by their jesting words they sow the seed
Of hope and doubt ; and some who would give heed
Now fear the raillery of their former friends.
At last the mission of the deva ends,
And he returns unto his former home.
Now nevermore does any being come
To warn them or remind them of their fate ;
Tho' men soon lapse into their former state.

XVIII

For tho' he preacht with faithfulness and power,
Yet as the distance greatens from that hour,
Although unto their doom the time grows less,
Men sink into a blind forgetfulness,
And turn again to their old joys and cares ;
And, fully busied with the world's affairs,
Think more of present ease than how to flee
From all the evil that is yet to be.

XIX

So as the years go by they fall again
To their old follies, yea, and warned in vain,
To their old sins : so evil waxes rife ;
Men lust and steal, speak falsely and take life,
Commit the five sins, and neglect to keep
The five commandments ; therefore they must weep
A rain of bitter tears, tho' this will not
Wash out their wickedness or change their lot.

XX

Howbeit with religious care some strive
To keep the knowledge of this thing alive
Within their hearts, and tell it to their sons.
Yet ever in a lessening stream it runs
From age to age, just as in distant lands
Some rivers lessen, flowing through hot sands,
Until they vanish wholly from men's gaze,
Tho' they flow on still but by hidden ways.

XXI

For soon the multitudes of those to whom
The word first came, die off, and in their room
Arise their children, who not having heard
With their own ears the deva's solemn word,
Give little heed thereto, yet make it known
To their descendants, who by this have grown
To question what men have so long believed
And think their fathers might have been deceived.

XXII

And as the years roll on, their doubt, at first
Dumb or low-spoken, waxes and well nurst
Grows into flat denial. Even those
Who still are heedful of the coming woes
Do not agree, but with intensest hate
Quarrel among themselves about the date,
Or other matters, till with all the rest
They grow to be a byword and a jest.

XXIII

The ages pass, and unbelief and sin
Now fills the world, and few that are therein
Now speak about the burning of the earth,
And when they do, it only wakens mirth :
Their children laugh at them, or take no note,
Or think at heart, ' Ah, how the old folks dote !
This is their second childhood, and they show
What their old nurses taught them long ago.'

XXIV

Still centuries pass ; and now some sage who looks
Among dim records, lights on some old books
Writ in a tongue now obsolete although
His fathers spoke it ; yet he toils therethrough,
And learning of this greatest of all griefs,
Discourses learnedly on old beliefs,
And moralises sagely thereupon,
Remarking how much wiser men have grown.

XXV

Still years on years go by, and now at last
The message, whereat once men stood aghast,
Dies wholly out of all belief ; not one
In all the millions underneath the sun
Now heeds it ; should some antiquary try
To prove that it was once believed, those nigh
Would smile and, by a love of truth impelled,
Deny that ever such a thing was held.

XXVI

The world becomes corrupt : all forms of sin
Now flourish openly ; and yet therein
One form thereof eclipses all the rest
By its surpassing greatness—in man's breast
There burns insatiate lust and fierce desire :
And so at last a veritable fire
Burns them to ashes ; and ere this their lust
Slays them by sore diseases, as is just.

XXVII

And so the ending of the age draws near.
At length the last day dawns, and yet no fear
Is in men's hearts, for they perceive it not.
The reckoning of the years is clean forgot :
No signs of wrath are in the cloudless sky,
Benignly still the sun smiles from on high ;
Still bounteous Nature to the reaper yields
The precious harvests of her floods and fields.

XXVIII

The day dies down in peace : the world's great light
Bequeaths the broad earth to the tranquil night,
And all seek sleep, unweeting of their doom.
The next day dawns, and lo! a welcome gloom
Sobers the earth, for there is rain o'erhead,
And presently the cooling showers are shed
Thro' all the worlds, and all therein are glad.
Why should the coming of the rain make sad ?

XXIX

At last it ceases, then the joyous birds
Fill heav'n with music, and the sober herds
Crop the new grass : the wild beasts every one
Shake their wet fells and seek the welcome sun ;
The flowers give forth their scents tho' none may heed,
And man goes forth and sows the world with seed
From which he thinks that harvests from the mould
Will rise and pay him back a hundred-fold.

XXX

But never harvest from that seed is born ;
No sickle smites against the rustling corn ;
No women toil to grind it into bread ;
For never rain falls more, so dry and dead
The seeds abide beneath the dusty clods,
Tho' prayers besiege the dwellings of the gods :
Men fly to saints and wizards, but in vain.
So all things languish for the lack of rain.

XXXI

Soon every green herb dies ; and every wood
And forest withers up—there is no food :
The wells dry up, and there is nought to drink
But in far lakes and rivers; so men sink
And die by millions, and the dusty earth
Is covered with their carcases. The dearth
Extends to devas and to other folk,
And smites all beings with an equal stroke.

XXXII

The devas that reside in flowers and trees,
Yakás, garúndas, nákas, men—all these
Endure much agony, then droop and die ;
And then all born in deva-worlds that lie
Beyond the reach of that devouring heat,
And then in Brahma-worlds ; but, as is meet,
The beings meritless, the record tells,
Find further punishment in far-off hells.

XXXIII

And so the earth becomes an empty place,
Lifeless and voiceless, and thus bides a space ;
When suddenly a second sun appears
For her affliction ; then wide-spreading meres,
The lesser rivers, and the lakes and tanks
Soon disappear ; and all between their banks
Is nothing but white sand or stonelike mud,
Yet Ganges rolls along a dwindled flood ;

XXXIV

And Brahmapootra yields a sickly tide,
And so does Indus and two streamr beside,
For Himalaya's mighty store of snow
Fails not as yet ; but soon the stedfast glow
Of that unsetting sun lays bare what man
Has never lookt on since the world began :
Himàla lays aside her garments wan :
No particle of snow remains thereon.

XXXV

The earth is crackt and rent on hill and plain,
And from a thousand mouths calls out for rain
Whereon a third sun rises in the sky,
And there abides and thence relentlessly
Shrivels the earth with fierce consuming gaze.
The deva of the first sun in amaze
And terror quits his orb, which still shines on,
Tho' all untenanted when he is gone.

XXXVI

A fourth sun rises ; then the sea-like lakes
Boil and are troubled, and the tumult shakes
Their ghastly shores, for corpses line the banks
Of lakes and rivers and of pools and tanks.
For there they crawl and lay them down and die,
And now like heaps of withered sticks they lie
And wait the fire which now is drawing near.
At last the great lakes wholly disappear.

XXXVII

Then is a fifth sun formed, whereat the seas
Grow less, then vanish, and not only these,
But even the oceans, fathomless and vast,
Are emptied, drained, and dried, and at the last
Have not wherewith to slake an insect's thirst.
So earth is waterless, and now the worst
Is past and gone—all life is fled away,
And there is nought for future suns to slay.

XXXVIII

The crispèd earth is like a piece of coke.
A sixth, and lo ! the earth begins to smoke,
At first a little, and then more and more,
And all the suns are hidden, yet they pour
Their hot beams down with unrelenting glow,
And evermore the cloud-like masses grow
And fill the heav'n with volumes hot and dense.
And now the world waits in a dread suspense.

XXXIX

A seventh sun! and lo! the flames are curl'd
About the dry mass of the smoking world,
Which roars and crackles in the quenchless fire.
The whole round world is one gigantic pyre
Whereon the myriads of the dead are laid.
The last sun was the torch, for by its aid
The flames were lit; hark how they roar and hiss
What are the burnings of great kings to this?

XL

The world burns on for ages with a roar
Of thunderous noises : blasted to the core
It reels beneath the heaven-resounding shocks
Of riven mountains and descending rocks.
The rock-knit valleys are all rent apart,
The fire eats down into its very heart,
And falls upon the core and feeds thereon,
Till every vestige of the whole is gone.

XLI

So Maha Brahma's messenger spake truth,
Tho' old age smil'd its doubts, and froward youth
Laught, saying, 'If the world catch fire, no doubt
The Himalayan snows will put it out,'
And made his words a target for its wit.
These, though they die and pass, can never quit
The worlds that are to be destroyed, and so
Cannot escape from that derided woe.

XLII

The fire burns on till there is nought to burn,
Till ev'n a Buddha's eyes could not discern
A particle of ash throughout the space
In which those worlds and systems once had place.
So all these worlds are utterly destroyed
And brought to nothing, and a flawless void
Is in the heav'ns—a vast and dark abyss.
Was ever a destruction like to this ?

XLIII

And thus it is for ages, but at last
Dawns a new cycle : then into that vast
And sunless void a ceaseless rain pours down
Thro' many ages, till the space has grown
Filled with fresh water ; then therein are formed
Worlds equal to the sum of those that swarmed
In that same space before they felt the sev'n
Great suns, and perisht with the fire from heav'n.

XLIV

The work of ages, here each system lies.
Then from all sides of heav'n strong winds arise
And blow upon the watery mass, and these
Dry up the waters, but by slow degrees.
And first appear the Brahma-worlds, and then
The Deva-worlds, and lastly that of men.
But first in this (as last to be destroyed)
The Bo-tree's birthplace rises from the void.

XLV

A lotus marks the spot, and if in that
 Commencing cycle any Bodhisat
 Should gain the Buddhahship, the lotus bears
 One blossom ; and if more than one appears
 More than one Buddha will arise ; no flower
 Thus means no Buddha. Brahmas great in power
 Come down to seek for flowers, and if they find,
 Cry, ' There will be salvation for mankind.'

XLVI

Seven times this thing befalls our heavens and earth
 And others, and seven times new worlds have birth ;
 Seven times new suns glow, and fresh life appears ;
 Seven times inhabitants of other spheres
 Find here new homes, and stock the world with men,
 The seventh great cycle fills its term, and then
 No fire bursts forth as on each former day,
 But mighty waters wear the world away.

XLVII

But ere that day there comes a warning word,
 As heretofore, the which when men have heard
 They go their ways to ponder or make mirth,
 And violence in time fills all the earth.
 The seasons come and go, the years pass by,
 The ages roll away, the end draws nigh,
 And comes at last, unknown, and once again
 Throughout all worlds there falls a welcome rain ;

XLVIII

And man rejoices, and not man alone.
And once again the world is ploughed and sown,
And man has made provision for his need.
Vain labour, and vain scattering of seed
That none shall reap : the rain-clouds reappear,
And rain falls and continues till men fear
Their late-sown seed will all be washt away,
The which thing happens on a hastening day.

XLIX

The rains descend increasingly : the brook
Now grows a river, and the rivers look
Like shoreless seas, and on their currents bear
Vast multitudes, whirl'd on they know not where,
Except it be to death. The rain falls now
In fiercer torrents, and the tree-tops bow
And break beneath it, while at times whole woods
With their foundations slip into the floods.

L

The huts and homes of men are flattened down ;
Then all cry, ' Fly we to the safer town !'
The roofs of palaces are broken in ;
The mighty temples fall with awful din,
And multitudes that hoped to find in these
God-given refuge, perish. By degrees
The plains are covered, then tumultuously
To hills and mountains all the people flee.

LI

And heeding not the cry of those too weak
To follow them, they hasten on to seek
Some refuge from the fast-pursuing flood,
Which, thick with carcasses and dense with mud,
Devours the earth behind them. Man and beast
Now struggle with each other, not for feast
Of flesh and blood, but room whereon to stand,
And crowd together on the lessening land.

LII

And then begins an agonizing strife ;
For just to gain a few short hours of life
Men battle fiercely for the highest ground ;
Yet notwithstanding noble deeds abound :
Men set their children or their wives on high,
Then leap into the flood to choke and die
Before their faces; and appealing hands
Make death-given vacancies on higher stands.

LIII

Why lengthen out the agony until
Men curse or weep? The floods creep higher still
Till Himalaya's highest peak alone
Remains uncovered—this is overflown,
Then all is one blank ocean ; over all
Is gloom and silence, for no voices call
For succour, and no arms reach up in vain :
The world has perisht by the scourge of rain.

LIV

This is no flood from which those worlds arise
More fruitful than aforetime : never eyes
Behold them more, in time they cease to be.
All things that have their dwellings in the sea
Or other waters, die and pass away,
And these corrosive waters day by day,
And age by age, gnaw at the worlds they hide
Till not one speck of them can be descried.

LV

Thro' slow formative ages worlds are formed
Within the deeps ; and rising out are warmed
By new-made suns, and life appears once more.
Seven times this thing befalls, but when threescore
And three destructions are gone by and past,
A new destruction happens, and this last
Is wrought by winds. But I will now relate
The fashion of this all-surpassing fate.

LVI

Before that end arrives the worlds grow filled
With blameful ignorance : men grow unskilled
In even common arts of life ; thereby
Come pest and famine, and whole millions die
Upon the foodful earth for lack of bread
And want of wisdom ; and at last o'erhead
The rain-clouds that proclaim the end are massed :
Unknown to all, the day of grace has passed.

LVII

The rains descend : they slake the earth's deep thirst;
The clouds are rolled away: all things outburst
In one glad anthem. But the earth again
Grows hot and dry, while still on hill and plain
The great sun glares with desiccating gaze ;
But presently a gentle breeze allays
The stifling heat, and men creep out once more,
And go about their labours as before.

LVIII

The sweating toiler as he drives his plough
Along the dusty furrows, pauses now
And rests awhile amid the stony clods
To wipe his beaded face and thank the gods :
Ships long-becalmed at sea resume their course :
The languid sybarites now feel new force
And rise to make provision for their lusts.
The wind increases, blowing in sharp gusts.

LIX

As yet none fear, for wherefore should they dread
The outblown garment or uncovered head?
Such things are only matter for their mirth.
And now the dust is blown about the earth ;
The sand soon follows and pours down like rain,
And all seek shelter, for the burning grain
Is in all nostrils and all streaming eyes :
The torn-off leaves make darkness in the skies.

LX

The wind goes on increasing night and day :
Whole villages at length are swept away ;
And those who seek escape are beaten down
And bruised and broken on the earth, and blown
And rolled about like feathers : in that blast
The trees are snapt like reeds : the stones roll past,
The gravel is torn up, and grides and roars
More than the shingle on a thousand shores.

LXI

The clods and stones are whirled about, and still
That wind grows greater and more great, until
Great rocks that many men would strive in vain
To move, are loosed and rolled about the plain
Or down the mountain-side : the fierce winds beat
Against the forests, and as fields of wheat
Are beaten down, so these are all laid prone ;
With mighty crashings are they overthrown.

LXII

Snapt off or torn up by the roots they fall,
And in their ruin whelm and stifle all
Cowering beneath ; to wit the quaking tribes
Of birds and beasts : the elephant's huge ribs
Mingle their crackling with the rending trees.
The rivers are blown from their beds, the seas
Roll up the bounding hills a thundering tide,
And choke the valleys on the further side.

LXIII

Then comes the wind that is to loose the world :
The seas are blown to spray, the rocks are hurled
Against the skies, and all the air is rife
With awful noises. Then begins a strife
To which the battles of the gods who fought
With earth-born Titans are as things of nought,
Or games of children when in merry hours
They pelt each other with soft-smiting flowers.

LXIV

The winds have made the universe their prey,
The strong foundations of the worlds give way ;
The worlds are moved, they stagger, reel, and fall :
The suns and moons are shaken out, and all
Confusedly about the skies are blown :
The systems fall asunder and roll down,
Fall in with others, and with crushing force
Grinde one another in their onward course.

LXV

Fierce discord follows : world is dasht on world
With countless thunders : mighty suns are hurl'd
On suns as mighty : with resistless might
Whole streams of systems in their maddened flight
Rush on their like and perish, rent and smasht.
The hells beat on the heav'ns ; the heav'ns are dasht
Against the hells, which, bursting, light up space.
Woe to their dwellers for they have no grace !

LXVI

The strife goes on, vast rocks are dasht on rocks,
Heaven fills with flames and space resounding shocks,
And far-off worlds are moved and those therein
Fear, and sore troubled turn them from their sin.
Earths fall to fragments : oceans, lakes, and seas
Whirl, shaken from their beds and mix ; then these
Are dasht upon the blazing hells and make
A tumult at the which the far gods quake,

LXVII

The crash and roar of that terrific strife
Sounds thro' the breadth of space. The heav'ns are rife
With grinding up of worlds and orbs that crash
In horrible collision : red hells flash,
And earths are grated up, and suns and spheres
Are split asunder till all disappears
Ground up to nothing, and till not two grains,
Nay not one atom, of the whole remains.

LXVIII

And thus the winds work out the mighty doom,
And silence and impenetrable gloom
Fill up the mighty void ; and when again
Another cycle dawns a forming rain
Falls thereinto, and from abysmal birth
At last there rises up new heavens and earth ;
And these are stockt, as on each former day,
From far-off worlds which never pass away.

LXIX

Thus all the worlds are utterly destroyed,
And thus new worlds rise from the darkened void ;
Thus they are peopled from the distant spheres.
Now if this thing be grievous in your ears,
And ye are like to curse as ye are made
Hear millions shrieking for ungranted aid,
Curse on, but curse ye not the gods, for know
That these are guiltless of such mighty woe.

LXX

Curse ye demerit, for this thing alone
Supplies the power by which such things are done ;
The whole demerit of all beings burns,
Melts, and grinds up the universe by turns,
And their united merit forms a new.
So systems perish, so they rise to view,
And have their birth and blossom and decay,
And have done ever, and will do alway.

LXXI

But what of Buddha, and his creed amid
The cyclic changes ? Has that great one hid
The matter from us ? Nay, in startled ears
He cried : ' My creed shall live five thousand years ;
I shall lead countless multitudes to peace,
And at the end thereof my reign shall cease ;
Another Buddha shall appear, and I
And all the glory of my reign go by.'

CANTO XIII.

I

CAN we despise him, or revile his creed,
Or curse his greatness? Whatso'er his meed,
He surely does not merit our contempt,
Tho' he may have our censure, and we empt
The vials of our wrath upon his head,
Because he wandered from the truth and led
The East astray: yet tho' his crime be great,
He seems more worthy of our love than hate.

II

For tender as a woman is, and mild
And meek and loving as a little child,
This man appears; yet with a quiet strength
He wrought his work and ran the weary length
Of his long course; yet lookt he for no bowers
Of paradise, nor did he tread on flowers,
Nor were rough places levelled to his feet,
Whate'er the foolish legends may repeat.

P

III

Not his the hope that there would come a time
 Of recompense, when in some happier clime
 His work should be rewarded, and when all
 Whom he had saved with joyful tears should fall
 Upon his bosom, saying: ' All that we
 Now have or are, O friend, we owe to thee !
 Thou savedst us when in an evil case,
 Thou leddest us unto this happy place.'

IV

We will not hate him, but shall we be blamed
 If we admire and love the man who shamed,
 By love and gentleness in word and deed,
 The harsh disciples of a nobler creed ?
 Or shall we feel the hasty bigot's rod
 Because we deem him like the Son of God ?
 Howe'er it be, his name shall be enrolled
 Among the foremost of the great of old.

V

But thou who criest, ' Justice knows no ruth ;
 Can he be beautiful who fails in truth ?
 Can he be worthy of a man's regard
 Who has dethroned his Maker, and tried hard
 To rob Him of all worship ? who denied
 Life to the Life of all things, and, blind-eyed,
 Gazed on the stars and on the sun and moon ?
 Judge not too quickly nor condemn too soon.

VI

He wrought with God and Nature, and prevailed ;
He strove with God and Nature, and he failed ;
He strove with systems, and the human mind
Became his bondman ; but he failed to bind
The heart for long : this burst his bands and broke
From his uneasy and unlovely yoke,
And ceased not worrying the mind until
The traitor intellect had wrought its will.

VII

For as of old the regions of the dead
Were peopled with the living, tho' one said,
' Therein is neither knowledge, nor device,
Nor work nor wisdom ;' and as Paradise
And Hell sprang up therein at man's command,
Until the Land of Darkness and the Land
Of Silence and Forgetfulness thus grew
A busy empire to the later Jew ;

VIII

So in the lapse of time it came about
That of Nirvána or the blowing out
Of all existence, even as a breath
Blows out a flickering flame, as none love death,
They made a paradise, wherein alone
Life's evils perish, utterly out-blown ;
Where no more vexed by any evil strife,
Man lives a blessed and eternal life.

IX

He let the gods live on, but dragged them down
 From their high seats. So Brahma lost his crown,
 Brahm was forgotten, and he made them all
 Meek suppliants for his rest ; so, great and small,
 The gods all served him. Thus this man bereaved
 The East of its old idols ; sorely grieved
 Were men thereat, because the heart alway
 Must worship something whatsoe'er men say.

X

So choosing Boodh (they might have chos'n a worse)
 Upon the high throne of the universe
 He had made vacant, thinking none should sit
 Thereon for ever, seeing none were fit ;
 They placed him, and with all the gods bow'd down,
 And did him homage, yea, and, foolish grown,
 They called him God ; and thus the dead man reigns
 Supreme thro' Tibet and the Mongol plains.

XI

Yet mightily and with a healing strife
 He stirred the stagnant pool of Eastern life,
 And toucht the hard heart of the cruel East
 Wtth love and tenderness for man and beast ;
 And shamed the people of their thirst for blood,
 And made men brothers, and held back the flood
 Of men's uncleanness, and made goodness wise,
 And virtue lovely in the people's eyes.

XII

Bare-headed, and bare-footed monk, say why
Thou dost so love the Boodh? He makes reply :
' Because the Boodh when yet a Bodhisat,
And subject to the many evils that
Attend on birth, refused Nirvána so
That he might gain the Buddhaship, and know
The causes of continuance, and then
Proclaim deliverance to gods and men.

XIII

' All for the joy of making known the way
Of endless peace upon a distant day,
He bore to live unblest ; so we love him
Because he cast himself into the stream
Of being, and for our sakes was content
To bear its many griefs : compassion lent
The strength he needed, for he oft would fain
Have reacht Nirvána and the end of pain.

XIV

' Thro' myriads of ages he foresaw
His exaltation. Pleasure could not draw
Nor sorrow turn him back, and so at last
He gained the Buddhaship ; but ere this, pass'd
Thro' many forms of being ; at one time
He was a monarch putting down all crime
And ruling justly, strong to slay or save ;
Another time he was a beaten slave ;

XV

‘An elephant, he bore upon his neck
 A driver, and turned meekly at his beck
 Whereso he listed ; also he became
 A driver, and in turn did just the same
 As his old driver in an age gone by ;
 ‘An eagle, he soared proudly thro’ the sky ;
 A serpent, o’er the dust he dragged his length ;
 A horse, he gloried in his mighty strength ;

XVI

‘ A crow, he fed on carrion ; a dog,
 A jackal, and an ape, a fish, a frog,
 A lion roaring thro’ the woods, a deer
 Pursued by lions or the flying spear
 Of some swift huntsman pressing close behind ;
 An outcast of all castes ; yea, and I find
 A devil-dancer—all these he became,
 For our salvation : blessèd be his name !’

XVII

To those who deem life burdensome, and those
 Whose highest happiness is calm repose,
 The great ascetic’s name will still be dear ;
 And beautiful will his meek life appear
 To all who deem humility a grace ;
 The kind will see a beauty in his face ;
 And few indeed shall speak of him with scorn,
 And fewer curse the day when he was born.

XVIII

A Greater yet shall cause him to dismount
From his high throne ; till then his faith shall count
Its followers by nations, and survive
The dying out of empires, and still live
Tho' dynasties and kingdoms taste of death.
This faith has flourisht as none other faith
Has ever flourisht, and it shall not die
Until the passing of the earth and sky.

XIX

It has beheld the casting down of thrones,
The birth and death of empires, seen the stones
Of ruined cities quarried, watcht the birth
And growth of systems that still rule the earth ;
Borne bitter persecution, hollowed out
The mountains into temples, where the drought
Of summer comes not and the owls keep tryst,
Nor yielded to Mohammed or to Christ.

XX

The Orient may still call Buddha lord
And languish for his rest, and still his word
May rule the multitudes that dote and dream ;
But we are children of the North, and deem
Existence is no burden, and think life
Not over-joyous yet a noble strife ;
And hate inaction and the torpid rest
The hopeless followers of Boodh deem best.

XXI

Our sires of old were worshippers of Thor
And all the hearty Norse gods : they made war
Against the West and conquered: from their home
In the bleak North they swarmed, and world-great Rome
Was broken by them and became their prey ;
A mighty spoil, not to be reft away
Ev'n from their children's children. We have still
The olden vigour and the ancient will.

XXII

We serve the Lord Christ now, and yet outvie
The great deeds of our fathers : lands that lie
Beyond the sunset know us : in the South
We make our dwellings ; all the lands of drouth
Amazed, behold us ; and we have not ceast
To hold the empire of the slothful East ;
And old Cathay shall stay us sooner than
Our name shall be forgotten in Japan.

XXIII

A restless people, an inventive race,
We think and travel at a giant pace ;
Our changes tread upon each other's heels ;
The roar of engines and the whirr of wheels
Are our familiar noises: we have turned
The world into a workshop, and have learned
To yoke the powers of Nature, and, grown wise,
Steam o'er the seas and navigate the skies.

XXIV

So Buddha may not lord it in the West
Among the nations who abhor his rest ;
We deem his arguments too weak to blind
The well-train'd reason, or deceive the mind,
Or maze the thought, for we have learnt to speak
And judge and reason like the subtle Greek :
We try the bases whereon creeds are built,
And think we know the golden from the gilt.

XXV

Moreover we serve Christ, a grander far
Than Indian Buddha. As the morning star
He beams prophetic of a coming day :
All else are marsh-lights and lead far astray ;
His deeds are godlike and His words are sure ;
His kingdom yet shall come, and shall endure
For endless ages thro' the breadth and girth
Of this wide-pastured many-peopled earth.

XXVI

Then shall great Asia serve a worthy Lord ;
Then shall the nations of the East accord
Their love and homage to a faultless king.
Till then her change of dynasties must bring
A change of tyrants only. Till that day
Must scheming sophists lead her far astray,
And all her many-millioned lands pine on
In hopeless languor as in years ago.

XXVII

Him shall none deem contemptible because
 He binds His followers with no grievous laws
 Of meat and drink and raiment, nor yet chides
 The slaying of foul things, nor yet forbids
 All such as hunger for a higher life
 To take the name of husband or of wife,
 Nor drives us into solitude to win
 Inglorious victories over famisht sin.

XXVIII

O Buddha ! to the weary and opprest
 With many sorrows, thou dost promise rest,
 As deeming that most sweet, since men must live
 A life of toilsome vanity, and give
 Their hearts to sorrow and their eyes to tears.
 We envy not thy rest ; the coming years
 Will bring us to a rest as calm and deep,
 ' For so God giveth his belovèd sleep.'

XXIX

He bringeth night upon us, and the day
 With its loud empty noises dies away,
 And we lie passionless, and meek, and still,
 As wearied with the strife of good and ill ;
 He giveth darkness, and men rest ; likewise
 He giveth morning, and the sleepers rise
 Refreshed and strengthened : winter leads to spring.
 ' Ye dwellers in the dust, awake and sing.'

XXX

Compassionate art thou, and yet, O Boodh !
To whom thou givest death as thy best good,
He giveth life eternal : and to those
Whom thou dost seek to burden with the woes
Of endless being as their meet reward,
A grander punishment He will accord—
They shall die utterly, and, as one saith,
Have their meet portion in a second death.

XXXI

Thy saints die sorrowfully, knowing not
What is appointed as their future lot,
Since this world's sorrows may not have suffic'd
For old demerits : not uncheered by Christ
Do our loth feet descend the dreadful slope :
' Our flesh moreover shall abide in hope.'
We know the when and whither : strong to save,
God will not leave us in the loathsome grave.

XXXII

All faiths have had their martyrs, and all creeds
Can boast of heroes, and right noble deeds
Have men done, battling for a worthless cause,
And all men seek not profit or applause.
O Fa Hian and Hwen Thsang ! your love and zeal
And gentleness and patience all reveal
The sweetness and the loveliness and good
That have been fostered by the faith of Boodh.

XXXIII

We, who are aliens to your land and faith,
 Claim ye as brethren, and not fearing scath
 Unto our own, we deem ye are indeed
 The Christ-like followers of a godless creed.
 May'st thou, O pilgrim, who didst wish to be
 Born in the world again, there faithfully
 To serve the next Boodh, have a better meed
 Than ever promist by thy gloomy creed !

XXXIV

And now the story of his life is told,
 And some scant records of his fame unroll'd,
 I will be silent, lest ye think I seem
 To love to linger on so sad a theme ;
 And ye have listened patiently and long
 To me an unknown singer, and my song
 Perchance has wearied you, for men in time
 Grow weary of the harmonies of rhyme.

THE END.

[SEPTEMBER 1871.]

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