

BOOK THE SECOND

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

Which the King marking, called his Ministers:
 "Bethink ye, sirs! how the old Rishi spake,"
 He said, "and what my dream-readers foretold,
 This boy, more dear to me than mine heart's blood,
 Shall be of universal dominance,
 Trampling the neck of all his enemies,
 A King of kings—and this is in my heart—
 Or he shall tread the sad and lowly path

Of self denial and of pious pains,
 Gaining who knows what good, when all is lost
 Worth keeping; and to this his wistful eyes
 Do still incline amid my palaces.
 But ye are sage, and ye will counsel me;
 How may his feet be turned to that proud road
 Where they should walk, and all fair signs come true
 Which gave him Earth to rule, if he would rule?"

The eldest answered, "Maharaja! love
 Will cure these thin distempers; weave the spell
 Of woman's wiles about his idle heart.
 What knows this noble boy of beauty yet,
 Eyes that make heaven forgot, and lips of balm?
 Find him soft wives and pretty playfellows;
 The thoughts ye cannot stay with brazen chains
 A girl's hair lightly binds."

And all thought good,
 But the King answered, "If we seek him wives,
 Love chooseth oft times with another eye;
 And if we bid range Beauty's garden round,
 To pluck what blossom pleases, he will smile
 And sweetly shun the joy he knows not of."
 Then said another, "Roams the *barasingh*
 Until the fated arrow flies; for him,
 As for less lordly spirits, someone charms,
 Some face will seem a Paradise, some form
 Fairer than pale Dawn when she wakes the world.
 This do, my King! Command a festival
 Where the realm's maids shall be competitors
 In youth and grace, and sports that Sākya use.
 Let the Prince give the prizes to the fair,

And, when the lovely victors pass his seat,
 There shall be those who mark if one or two
 Change the fixed sadness of his tender cheek;
 So we may choose for Love with Love's own eyes,
 And cheat his Highness into happiness."
 This thing seemed good; wherefore, upon a day
 The criers bade the young and beautiful
 Pass to the palace, for 'twas in command
 To hold a court of pleasure, and the Prince
 Would give the prizes, something rich for all,
 The richest for the fairest judged. So flocked
 Kapilavastu's maidens to the gate,
 Each with her dark hair newly smoothed and bound,
 Eyelashes lusted with the *soorma stick*,
 Fresh bathed and scented; all in *shawls* and cloths
 Of gayest; slender hands and feet new-stained
 With crimson, and *tilka-spots* stamped bright.
 Fair show it was of all those Indian girls
 Slow-pacing past the throne with large black eyes
 Fixed on the ground, for when they saw the Prince
 More than the awe of Majesty made beat
 Their fluttering hearts, he sat so passionless,
 Gentle, but so beyond them. Each maid took
 With down-dropped lids her gift, afraid to gaze;
 And if the people hailed some lovelier one
 Beyond her rivals worthy royal smiles,
 She stood like a scared antelope to touch
 The gracious hand, then fled to join her mates
 Trembling at favour, so divine he seemed,
 So high and saint-like and above her world.
 Thus filed they, one bright maid after another,

The city's flowers, and all this beauteous march
 Was ending and the prizes spent, when last
 Came young Yasodhara, and they that stood
 Nearest Siddhârtha saw the princely boy
 Start, as the radiant girl approached. A form
 Of heavenly mould; a gait like Parvati's;
 Eyes like a hind's in love-time, face so fair—
 Words cannot paint its spell; and she alone
 Gazed full—folding her palms across her breasts—
 On the boy's gaze, her stately neck unbent.
 "Is there a gift for me?" she asked, and smiled.
 "The gifts are gone," the Prince replied, "yet take
 This for amends, dear sister, of whose grace
 Our happy city boasts;" therewith he loosed
 The emerald necklet from his throat, and clasped
 Its green beads round her dark and silk-soft waist;
 And their eyes mixed, and from the look sprang love.

Long after—when enlightenment was full—
 Lord Buddha, being prayed why thus his heart
 Took fire at first glance of the Sākya girl,
 Answered, "We were not strangers, as to us
 And all it seemed; in ages long gone by
 A hunter's son, playing with forest girls
 By Yamun's springs, where Nandadevi stands,
 Sat umpire while they raced beneath the firs
 Like hares at eve that run their playful rings;
 One with flower-stars he crowned; one with long plumes
 Plucked from eyed pheasant and the jungle-cock,
 One with fir-apples; but who ran the last
 Came first for him, and unto her the boy
 Gave a tame fawn and his heart's love beside.

And in the wood they lived many glad years,
 And in the wood they undivided died.
 Lo! as hid seed shoots after rainless years,
 So good and evil, pains and pleasures, hates
 And loves, and all dead deeds, come forth again
 Bearing bright leaves or dark, sweet fruit or sour.
 Thus I was he and she Yasodhara;
 And while the wheel of birth and death turns round
 That which hath been must be between us two."

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

The fond King smiled:

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

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

Therefore, upon the seventh day, there went
 The Sākya lords and town and country round,
 Unto the maidān; and the maid went too
 Amid her kinsfolk, carried as a bride,
 With music, and with litters gaily dight,
 And gold-horned oxen, flower-caparisoned:
 Whom Devadatta claimed, of royal line,
 And Nanda and Arjuna, noble both,
 The flower of all youths there, till the Prince came
 Riding his white horse Kantaka, which neighed,
 Astonished at this great strange world without:
 Also Siddhārtha gazed with wondering eyes
 On all those people born beneath the throne,
 Otherwise housed than kings, otherwise fed,
 And yet so like—perchance—in joys and griefs.

But when the Prince saw sweet Yasodhara,
 Brightly he smiled, and drew his silken rein,
 Leaped to the earth from Kantaka's broad back,
 And cried, "He is not worthy of this pearl
 Who is not worthiest; let my rivals prove
 If I have dared too much in seeking her."
 Then Nanda challenged for the arrow-test
 And set a brazen drum six gows away,
 Arjuna six and Devadatta eight;
 But Prince Siddhārtha bade them set his drum
 Ten gows from off the line, until it seemed
 A cowry-shell for target. Then they loosed,
 And Nanda pierced his drum, Arjuna his,
 And Devadatta drove a well-aimed shaft
 Through both sides of his mark, so that the crowd
 marvelled and cried; and sweet Yasodhara
 Dropped the gold sari o'er her fearful eyes,
 Lest she should see her Prince's arrow fail.
 But he, taking the bow of lacquered cane,
 With sinews bound, and strung with silver wire,
 Which none but stalwart arms could draw a span,
 Thrummed it—low laughing—drew the twisted string
 Till the horns kissed, and the thick belly snapped:
 "That is for play, not love," he said, "hath none
 A bow more fit for Sākya lords to use?"
 And one said, "There is Sinhahanu's bow,
 Kept in the temple since we know not when,
 Which none can string, nor draw if it be strung."
 "Fetch me," he cried, "that weapon of a man!"
 They brought the ancient bow, wrought of black steel,
 Laid with gold tendrils on its branching curves

Like bison - horns; and twice Siddhārtha tried
 Its strength across his knee, then spake—"Shoot now
 With this, my cousins!" but they could not bring
 The stubborn arms a hand's - breadth nigher use;
 Then the Prince, lightly leaning, bent the bow,
 Slipped home the eye upon the notch, and twanged
 Sharply the cord, which, like an eagle's wing
 Thrilling the air, sang forth so clear and loud,
 That feeble folk at home that day inquired
 "What is this sound?" and people answered them
 "It is the sound of Sinhahanu's bow,
 Which the King's son has strung and goes to shoot."
 Then fitting fair a shaft, he drew and loosed,
 And the keen arrow clove the sky, and drave
 Right through that farthest drum, nor stayed its flight,
 But skimmed the plain beyond, past reach of eye.

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

Then brought they steeds,
 High-mettled, nobly-bred, and three times scoured
 Around the *maidān*, but white Kantaka

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

Sink his fierce crest and stand subdued and meek,
 As though he knew our Lord and worshipped him.
 Nor stirred he while Siddhārtha mounted, then
 Went soberly to touch of knee and rein
 Before all eyes, so that the people said,
 "Strive no more, for Siddhārtha is the best."

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

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

Therefore the maid was given unto the Prince
 A willing spoil; and when the stars were good—
 Mesha, the Red Ram, being Lord of heaven—
 The marriage feast was kept, as Sākya use,
 The golden *gadi* set, the carpet spread,
 The wedding garlands hung, the arm-threads tied,
 The sweet cake broke, the rice and *attar* thrown,
 The two straws floated on the reddened milk,
 Which, coming close, betokened "love till death";
 The seven steps taken thrice around the fire,
 The gifts bestowed on holy men, the alms
 And temple-offerings made, the *mantras* sung,
 The garments of the bride and bridegroom tied.
 Then the grey father spake: "Worshipful Prince,
 She that was ours henceforth is only thine;
 Be good to her, who hath her life in thee."
 Wherewith they brought home sweet Yasodhara,
 With songs and trumpets, to the Prince's arms,
 And love was all in all.

Yet not to love
 Alone trusted the King; love's prison-house
 Stately and beautiful he bade them build,
 So that in all the earth no marvel was
 Like Vishramvan, the Prince's pleasure-place.
 Midway in those wide palace-grounds there rose
 A verdant hill whose base Rohini bathed,
 Murmuring adown from Himalay's broad feet,
 To bear its tribute into Gunga's waves.
 Southward a growth of tamarind trees and sāl,
 Thick set with pale sky-coloured ganthi flowers,
 Shut out the world, save if the city's hum

Came on the wind no harsher than when bees
 Buzz out of sight in thickets. Northwards soared
 The stainless ramps of huge Himāla's wall,
 Ranged in white ranks against the blue—untrod
 Infinite, wonderful—whose uplands vast,
 And lifted universe of crest and crag,
 Shoulder and shelf, green slope and icy horn,
 Riven ravine, and splintered precipice
 Led climbing thought higher and higher, until
 It seemed to stand in heaven and speak with gods.
 Beneath the snows dark forests spread, sharp laced
 With leaping cataracts and veiled with clouds:
 Lower grew rose-oaks and the great fir groves
 Where echoed pheasant's call and panther's cry,
 Clatter of wild sheep on the stones, and scream
 Of circling eagles: under these the plain
 Gleamed like a praying-carpet at the foot
 Of those divinest altars. Fronting this
 The builders set the bright pavilion up,
 Fair-planted on the terraced hill, with towers
 On either flank and pillared cloisters round.
 Its beams were carved with stories of old time
 Rādhā and Krishnā and the sylvan girls—
 Sita and Hanuman and Draupadi;
 And on the middle porch God Ganesha,
 With disc and look—to bring wisdom and wealth—
 Propitious sate, wreathing his sidelong trunk.
 By winding ways of garden and of court
 The inner gate was reached, of marble wrought,
 White with pink veins; the lintel lazulī,
 The threshold alabaster, and the doors

Sandal-wood, cut in pictured panelling;
 Whereby to lofty halls and shadowy bowers
 Passed the delighted foot, on stately stairs,
 Through latticed galleries, 'neath painted roofs
 And clustering columns, where cool fountains—fringed
 With lotus and nelumbo—danced, and fish
 Gleamed through their crystal, scarlet, gold, and blue.
 Great-eyed gazelles in sunny alcoves browsed
 The blown red roses; birds of rainbow wing
 Fluttered among the palms; doves, green and grey,
 Built their safe nests on gilded cornices;
 Over the shining pavements peacocks drew
 The splendours of their trains, sedately watched
 By milk-white herons and the small house-owls.
 The plum-necked parrots swung from fruit to fruit;
 The yellow sunbirds whirred from bloom to bloom,
 The timid lizards on the lattice basked
 Fearless, the squirrels ran to feed from hand,
 For all was peace; the shy black snake, that gives
 Fortune to households, sunned his sleepy coils
 Under the moon-flowers, where the musk-deer played,
 And brown-eyed monkeys chattered to the crows.
 And all this house of love was peopled fair
 With sweet attendance, so that in each part
 With lovely sights were gentle faces found,
 Soft speech and willing service; each one glad
 To gladden, pleased at pleasure, proud to obey;
 Till life glided beguiled, like a smooth stream
 Banked by perpetual flow'rs, Yasodhara
 Queen of the enchanting Court.

But innermost,

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

With sweet tree-milk in its own ivory cup.
 And night and day served there a chosen band
 Of *nautch-girls*, cup-bearers, and cymballers,
 Delicate, dark-browed ministers of love,
 Who fanned the sleeping eyes of the happy Prince,
 And when he waked, led back his thoughts to bliss
 With music whispering through the blooms, and charm
 Of amorous songs and dreamy dances, linked
 By chime of ankle-bells and wave of arms
 And silver *veena-strings*; while essences
 Of musk and champak, and the blue haze spread
 From burning spices, soothed his soul again
 To drowse by sweet Yasōdhara; and thus
 Siddhārtha lived forgetting.

Furthermore,
 The King commanded that within those walls
 No mention should be made of death or age,
 Sorrow, or pain, or sickness. If one drooped
 In the lovely Court—her dark glance dim, her feet
 Faint in the dance—the guiltless criminal
 Passed forth an exile from that Paradise,
 Lest he should see and suffer at her woe.
 Bright-eyed attendants watched to execute
 Sentence on such as spake of the harsh world
 Without, where aches and plagues were, tears and fears,
 And wail of mourners, and grim fume of pyres.
 'T was treason if a thread of silver strayed
 In tress of singing-girl or *nautch-dancer*;
 And every dawn the dying rose was plucked,
 The dead leaves hid, all evil sights removed:
 For said the King, "If he shall pass his youth

Far from such things as move to wistfulness,
And brooding on the empty eggs of thought,
The shadow of this fate, too vast for man,
May fade, belike, and I shall see him grow
To that great stature of fair sovereignty
When he shall rule all lands—if he will rule—
The King of kings and Glory of his time.”

Wherefore, around that pleasant prison-house—
Where love was gaoler and delights its bars,
But far removed from sight—the king bade build
A massive wall, and in the wall a gate
With brazen folding-doors, which but to roll
Back on their hinges asked a hundred arms;
Also the noise of that prodigious gate
Opening, was heard full half a *yोजना*.
And inside this another gate he made, And yet within
another—through the three
Must one pass if he quit that pleasure-house.
Three mighty gates there were, bolted and barred,
And over each was set a faithful watch;
And the King’s order said, “Suffer no man
To pass the gates, though he should be the Prince:
This on your lives—even though it be my son.”