

BOOK THE FIFTH

Round Rajagriha five fair hills arose,
 Guarding King Bimbisāra's sylvan town;
 Baibhāra, green with lemon-grass and palms;
 Bipulla, at whose foot thin Sarsuti
 Steals with warm ripple; shadowy Tapovan,
 Whose streaming pools mirror black rocks, which ooze
 Sovereign earth-butter from their rugged roofs;
 South-east the vulture-peak Sailagiri;
 And eastward Ratnagiri, hill of gems.
 A winding track, paven with footworn slabs,
 Leads thee, by safflower fields and bamboo tufts
 Under dark mangoes and the jujube-trees,
 Past milk-white veins of rock and jasper crags,
 Low cliff and flats of jungle-flowers, to where
 The shoulder of that mountain, sloping west,
 O'erhangs a cave with wild figs canopied.
 Lo! thou who comest thither, bare thy feet
 And bow thy head! for all this spacious earth
 Hath not a spot more dear and hallowed. Here
 Lord Buddha sate the scorching summers through,
 The driving rains, the chilly dawns and eves;
 Wearing for all men's sakes the yellow robe,
 Eating in beggar's guise the scanty meal
 Chance-gathered from the charitable; at night

Crouched on the grass, homeless, alone; while yelped
 The sleepless jackals round his cave, or coughs
 Of famished tiger from the thicket broke.
 By day and night here dwelt the World-honoured,
 Subduing that fair body born for bliss
 With fast and frequent watch and search intense
 Of silent meditation, so prolonged
 That oft-times while he mused—as motionless
 As the fixed rock his seat—the squirrel leaped
 Upon his knee, the timid quail led forth
 Her brood between his feet, and blue doves pecked
 The rice-grains from the bowl beside his hand.

Thus would he muse from noontide—when the land
 Shimmered with heat, and walls and temples danced
 In the reeking air—till sunset, noting not
 The blazing globe roll down, nor evening glide,
 Purple and swift, across the softened fields;
 Nor the still coming of the stars, nor throb
 Of drum-skins in the busy town, nor screech
 Of owl and night-jar; wholly wrapt from self
 In keen unravelling of the threads of thought
 And steadfast pacing of life's labyrinths.
 Thus would he sit till midnight hushed the world,
 Save where the beasts of darkness in the brake
 Crept and cried out, as fear and hatred cry,
 As lust and avarice and anger creep
 In the black jungles of man's ignorance.
 Then slept he for what space the fleet moon asks
 To swim a tenth part of her cloudy sea;
 But rose ere the false-dawn, and stood again
 Wistful on some dark platform of his hill,

Watching the sleeping earth with ardent eyes
 And thoughts embracing all its living things,
 While o'er the waving fields that murmur moved
 Which is the kiss of Morn waking the lands,
 And in the east that miracle of Day
 Gathered and grew: at first a dusk so dim
 Night seems still unaware of whispered dawn,
 But soon—before the jungle-cock crows twice—
 A white verge clear, a widening, brightening white,
 High as the herald-star, which fades in floods
 Of silver, warming into pale gold, caught
 By topmost clouds, and flaming on their rims
 to fevent golden glow, flushed from the brink
 With saffron, scarlet, crimson, amethyst;
 Whereat the sky burns splendid to the blue,
 And, robed in raiment of glad light, the King
 Of Life and Glory cometh!

Then our Lord,
 After the manner of a Rishi, hailed
 The rising orb, and went—ablutions made—
 Down by the winding path unto the town:
 And in the fashion of a Rishi passed
 From street to street, with begging-bowl in hand,
 Gathering the little pittance of his needs.
 Soon was it filled, for all the townsmen cried,
 "Take of our store, great sir!" and "Take of ours!"
 Marking his godlike face and eyes enwrap;
 And mothers, when they saw our Lord go by,
 Would bid their children fall to kiss his feet,
 And lift his robe's hem to their brows, or run
 To fill his jar, and fetch him milk and cakes.

And oft-times as he paced, gentle and slow,
 Radiant with heavenly pity, lost in care
 For those he knew not, save as fellow-lives,
 The dark surprised eyes of some Indian maid
 Would dwell in sudden love and worship deep
 On that majestic form, as is he saw
 Her dreams of tenderest thought made true, and grace
 Fairer than mortal fire her breast. But he
 Passed onward with the bowl and yellow robe,
 By mild speech paying all those gifts of hearts,
 Wending his way back to the solitudes
 To sit upon his hill with holy men,
 And hear and ask of wisdom and its roads.

Midway on Ratnagiri's groves of calm,
 Beyond the city, but below the caves,
 Lodged such as hold the body foe to soul,
 And flesh a beast which men must chain and tame
 With bitter pains, till sense of pain is killed,
 And tortured nerves vex torturer no more—
Yogis and Brahmacharis, Bhikshus, all
 A gaunt and mournful band, dwelling apart.
 Some day and night had stood with lifted arms,
 Till—drained of blood and withered by disease—
 Their slowly-wasting joints and stiffened limbs
 Jutted from sapless shoulders like dead forks
 From forest trunks. Others had clenched their hands
 So long and with so fierce a fortitude,
 The claw-like nails grew through the festered palm.
 Some walked on sandals spiked; some with sharp flints
 Gashed breast and brow and thigh, scarred these with
 fire,

Threaded their flesh with jungle thorns and spits,
 Besmeared with mud and ashes, crouching foul
 In rags of dead men wrapp'd about their loins.
 Certain there were inhabited the spots
 Where death pyres smouldered, cowering defiled
 With corpses for their company, and kites
 Screaming around them o'er the funeral-spoils;
 Certain who cried five hundred times a day
 The names of Shiva, wound with darting snakes
 About their sun-tanned necks and hollow flanks,
 One palsied foot drawn up against the ham.
 So gathered they, a grievous company;
 Crowns blistered by the blazing heat, eyes bleared,
 Sinews and muscles shrivelled, visages
 Haggard and wan as slain men's, five days dead;
 Here crouched one in the dust who noon by noon
 Meted a thousand grains of millet out,
 Ate it with famished patience, seed by seed,
 And so starved on; there one who bruised his pulse
 With bitter leaves lest palate should be pleased;
 And next, a miserable saint self-maimed,
 Eyeless and tongueless, sexless, crippled, deaf;
 The body by the mind being thus stripped
 For glory of much suffering, and the bliss
 Which they shall win—say holy books—whose woe
 Shames gods that send us woe, and makes men gods
 Stronger to suffer than Hells is to harm.

Whom sadly eyeing spake our Lord to one,
 Chief of the woe-begones: "Much-suffering sir!
 These many moons I dwell upon the hill—
 Who am a seeker of the Truth—and see

My brothers here, and thee, so piteously
 Self-anguished; wherefore add ye ills to life
 Which is so evil?"
 Answer made the sage:
 "'Tis written if a man shall mortify
 His flesh, till pain be grown the life he lives
 And death voluptuous rest, such woes shall purge
 Sin's dross away, and the soul, purified,
 Soar from the furnace of its sorrow, winged
 For glorious spheres and splendour past all thought."

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

"It may begin"

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

To gain the larger joys."

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

"Nay," the *Yogis* said,
"Only great *Brahma* endures: the Gods but live."

Then spake Lord Buddha: "Will ye, being wise,
As ye seem holy and strong-hearted ones,
Throw these sore dice, which are your groans and moans,
For gains which may be dreams, and must have end?
Will ye, for love of soul, so loathe your flesh,
So scourge and maim it, that it shall not serve
To bear the spirit on, searching for home,
But founder on the track before nightfall,
Like willing steed o'er-spurred? Will ye, sad sirs,
Dismantle and dismember this fair house,
Where we have come to dwell by painful pasts;
Whose windows give us light—the little light
Whereby we gaze abroad to know if dawn
will break, and whither winds the better road?"

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

Onward he passed,
Exceeding sorrowful, seeing how men

Fear so to die they are afraid to fear,

Lust so to live they dare not love their life,
But plague it with fierce penances, belike
To please the Gods who grudge pleasure to man;
Belike to baulk hell by self-kindled hells;
Belike in holy madness, hoping soul
May break the better through their wasted flesh.
"Oh, flowerets of the field!" Siddhārtha said,
"Who turn your tender faces to the sun—
Glad of the light, and grateful with sweet breath
Of fragrance and these robes of reverence donned
Silver and gold and purple—none of ye
Miss perfect living, none of ye despoil
Your happy beauty. O, ye palms, which rise
Eager to pierce the sky and drink the wind
Blown from Malaya and the cool blue seas,
What secret know ye that ye grow content,
From time of tender shoot to time of fruit,
Murmuring such sun-songs from your feathered crowns?
Ye, too, who dwell so merry in the trees—
Quick-darting parrots, bee-birds, *bulbuls*, doves—
None of ye hate your life, none of ye deem
To strain to better by foregoing needs!
But man, who slays ye—being lord—is wise,
And wisdom, nursed on blood, cometh thus forth
In self-tormentings!"

While the Master spake
Blew down the mount the dust of pattering feet,
White goats and black sheep winding slow their way,
With many a lingering nibble at the tufts,
And wanderings from the path, where water gleamed

Or wild figs hung. But always as they strayed
 The herdsman cried, or slung his sling, and kept
 The silly crowd still moving to the plain.
 A ewe with couplets in the flock there was.
 Some hurt had lamed one lamb, which toiled behind
 Bleeding, while in the front its fellow skipped,
 And the vexed dam hither and thither ran,
 Fearful to lose this little one or that;
 Which when our Lord did mark, full tenderly
 He took the limping lamb upon his neck,
 Saying: "Poor woolly mother, be at peace!
 Whither thou goest I will bear thy care;
 'Twere all as good to ease one beast of grief
 As sit and watch the sorrows of the world
 In yonder caverns with the priests who pray."
 "But," spake he to the herdsmen, "wherefore, friends,
 Drive ye the flocks adown under high noon,
 Since 'tis at evening that men fold their sheep?"

And answer gave the peasants: "We are sent
 To fetch a sacrifice of goats five-score,
 And five-score sheep, the which our Lord the King
 Slayeth this night in worship of his gods."

Then said the Master, "I will also go."
 So paced he patiently, bearing the lamb
 Beside the herdsmen in the dust and sun,
 The wistful ewe low-bleating at his feet.

Whom, when they came unto the river-side,
 A woman—dove-eyed, young, with tearful face
 And lifted hands—saluted, bending low:
 "Lord! thou art he," she said, "who yesterday

Had pity on me in the fig-grove here,
 Where I live lone and reared my child; but he
 Straying amid the blossoms found a snake,
 Which twined about his wrist, whilst he did laugh
 And tease the quick forked tongue and opened mouth
 Of that cold playmate. But, alas! ere long
 He turned so pale still, I could not think
 Why he should cease to play, and let my breast
 Fall from his lips. And one said, 'He is sick
 Of poison'; and another, 'He will die.'
 But I, who could not lose my precious boy,
 Prayed of them physic, which might bring the light
 Back to his eyes; it was so very small
 That kiss-mark of the serpent, and I think
 It could not hate him, gracious as he was,
 Nor hurt him in his sport. And some one said,
 'There is a holy man upon the hill—
 Lo! now he passeth in the yellow robe—
 Ask of the Rishi if there be a cure
 For that which ails thy son.' Whereon I came
 Trembling to thee, whose brow is like a god's,
 And wept and drew the face cloth from my babe,
 Praying thee tell what simples might be good.
 And thou, great sir, didst spurn me not, but gaze
 With gentle eyes and touch with patient hand;
 Then draw the face cloth back, saying to me,
 'Yea, little sister, there is that might heal
 Thee first, and him, if thou couldst fetch the thing;
 For they who seek physicians bring to them
 What is ordained. Therefore, I pray thee, find
 Black mustard-seed, a *tola*; only mark

Thou take it not from any hand or house
 Where father, mother, child, or slave hath died;
 It shall be well if thou canst find such seed.
 Thus didst thou speak, my Lord!"

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

"I went, Lord, clasping to my breast
 The babe, grown colder, asking at each hut—
 Here in the jungle and towards the town—
 'I pray you, give me mustard, of your grace,
 A *tola*—black'; and each who had it gave,
 For all the poor are piteous to the poor;
 But when I asked, 'In my friends' household here
 Hath any peradventure ever died—
 Husband, or wife, or child, or slave?' they said:
 'O sister! what is this you ask? the dead
 Are very many, and the living few!
 So with sad thanks I gave the mustard back,
 And prayed of others; but the others said,
 'Here is the seed, but we have lost our slave.'
 'Here is the seed, but our good man is dead!
 'Here is some seed, but he that sowed it died
 Between the rain-time and the harvesting!'
 Ah, sir I could not find a single house
 Where there was mustard-seed and none had died!
 Therefore I left child—who would not suck
 Nor smile—beneath the wild vines by the stream,
 To seek thy face and kiss thy feet, and pray
 Where I might find the seed and find no death,

If now, indeed, my baby be not dead,
 As I do fear, and as they said to me."

"My sister, thou hast found," the Master said,
 "Searching for what none finds—that bitter balm
 I had to give thee. He thou lovedst slept
 Dead on thy bosom yesterday: to-day
 Thou know'st the whole wide world weeps with thy
 woe;
 The grief which all hearts share grows less for one.
 Lo! I would pour my blood if it could stay
 Thy tears and win the secret of that curse
 Which makes sweet love our anguish, and which drives
 O'er flowers and pastures to the sacrifice—
 As these dumb beasts are driven—men their lords.
 I seek that secret: bury thou thy child!"

So entered they the city side by side,
 The herdsmen and the Prince, what time the sun
 Gilded slow Sona's distant stream, and threw
 Long shadows down the street and through the gate
 Where the King's men kept watch. But when they saw
 Our Lord bearing the lamp, the guards stood back,
 The market-people drew their wains aside,
 In the bazaar buyers and sellers stayed
 The war of tongues to gaze on that mild face;
 The smith, with lifted hammer in his hand,
 Forgot to strike; the weaver left his web,
 The scribe his scroll, the money-changer lost
 His count of cowries; from the unwatched rice
 Shiva's white bull fed free; the wasted milk

Ran o'er the *lota* while the milkers watched
 The passage of our Lord moving so meek,
 With yet so beautiful a majesty.
 But most the women gathering in the doors
 Asked: "Who is this that brings the sacrifice,
 So graceful and peace-giving as he goes?
 What is his caste? whence hath he eyes so sweet?
 Can he be Sākra or the Devaraj?"
 And others said, "It is the holy man
 Who dwelleth with the Rishis on the hill."
 But the Lord paced, in meditation lost,
 Thinking, "Alas! for all my sheep which have
 No shepherd; wandering in the night with none
 To guide them; bleating blindly towards the knife
 Of death, as these dumb beasts which are their kin."

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

The King stood in his hall of offering.
 On either hand the white-robed *Brahmans* ranged
 Muttered their mantras, feeding still the fire
 Which roared upon the midmost altar. There
 From scented woods flickered bright tongues of flame,
 Hissing and curling as they licked the gifts
 Of ghee and spices and the *soma juice*,
 The joy of Indra. Round about the pile
 A slow, thick, scarlet streamlet smoked and ran,
 Sucked by the sand, but ever rolling down,
 The blood of bleating victims. One such lay,

A spotted goat, long-horned, its head bound back
 With *munja grass*; at its stretched throat the knife
 Pressed by a priest, who murmured: "This, dread gods,
 Of many *yajnas* cometh as the crown
 From Bimbisāra: take ye joy to see
 The spurted blood, and pleasure in the scent
 Of rich flesh roasting 'mid the fragrant flames;
 Let the King's sins be laid upon this goat,
 And let the fire consume them burning it,
 For now I strike."

But Buddha softly said,
 "Let him not strike, great King! and therewith loosed
 The victim's bonds, none staying him, so great
 His presence was. Then, craving leave, he spake
 Of life, which all can take but none can give,
 Life, which all creatures love and strive to keep,
 Wonderful, dear and pleasant unto each,
 Even to the meanest; yea, a boon to all
 Where pity is, for pity makes the world
 Soft to the weak and noble for the strong.
 Unto the dumb lips of his flock he lent
 Sad pleading words, showing how man, who prays
 For mercy to the gods, is merciless,
 Being as god to these; albeit all life
 Is linked and kin, and what we slay have given
 Meek tribute of the milk and wool, and set
 Fast trust upon the hands which murder them.
 Also he spake of what the holy books
 Do surely teach, how that at death some sink

To bird and beast, and these rise up to man
 In wandering of the spark which grows purged flame.
 So were the sacrifice new sin, if so
 The fated passage of a soul be stayed.
 Nor, spake he, shall one wash his spirit clean
 By blood; nor gladden gods, being good, with blood;
 Nor bribe them, being evil; nay, nor lay
 Upon the brow of innocent bound beasts
 One hair's weight of that answer all must give
 For all things done amiss or wrongfully,
 Alone, each for himself, reckoning with that
 The fixed arithmic of the universe,
 Which meteth good for good and ill for ill,
 Measure for measure, unto deeds, words, thoughts;
 Watchful, aware, implacable, unmoved;
 Making all futures fruits of all the pasts.
 Thus spake he, breathing words so piteous
 With such high lordliness of ruth and right,
 The priests drew back their garments o'er the hands
 Crimsoned with slaughter, and the King came near,
 Standing with clasped palms reverencing Buddha;
 While still our Lord went on, teaching how fair
 This earth were if all living things be linked
 In friendliness, and common use of foods
 Bloodless and pure; the golden grain, bright fruits,
 Sweet herbs which grow for all, the waters wan,
 Sufficient drinks and meats. Which when these heard,
 The might of gentleness so conquered them;
 The priests themselves scattered their altar-flames
 And flung away the steef of sacrifice;

And through the land next day passed a decree
 Proclaimed by criers, and in this wise graved
 On rock and column: "Thus the king's will is:
 There hath been slaughter for the sacrifice,
 And slaying for the meat, but henceforth none
 Shall spill the blood of life nor taste of flesh,
 Seeing that knowledge grows, and life is one,
 And mercy cometh to the merciful."
 So ran the edict, and from those days forth
 Sweet peace hath spread between all living kind,
 Man and the beasts which serve him, and the birds,
 On all those banks of Gunga where our Lord
 Taught with his saintly pity and soft speech.

For aye so piteous was the Master's heart
 To all that breathe this breath of fleeting life,
 Yoked in one fellowship of joys and pains,
 That it is written in the holy books
 How, in an ancient age—when Buddha wore
 A Brahman's form, dwelling upon the rock
 Named Munda, by the village of Dālidd—
 Drought withered all the land: the young rice died
 Ere it could hide a quail; in forest glades
 A fierce sun sucked the pools; grasses and herbs
 Sickened, and all the woodland creatures fled
 Scattering for sustenance. At such a time,
 Between the hot walls of a *nullah*, stretched
 On naked stones, our Lord spied, as he passed,
 A starving tigress. Hunger in her orbs
 Glared with green flame; her dry tongue lolled a span
 Beyond the gasping jaws and shrivelled jowl;
 Her painted hide hung wrinkled on her ribs,

As when between the rafters sinks a thatch
 Rotten with rains; and at the poor lean dugs
 Two cubs, whining with famine, tugged and sucked,
 Mumbling those milkless teats which rendered nought,
 While she, their gaunt dam, licked full motherly
 The clamorous twins, yielding her flank to them
 With moaning throat, and love stronger than want,
 Softening the first of that wild cry wherewith
 She laid her famished muzzle to the sand
 And roared a savage thunder-peal of woe.
 Seeing which bitter strait, and heeding nought
 Save the immense compassion of a Buddha,
 Our Lord bethought, "There is no other way
 To help this murderess of the woods but one.
 By sunset these will die, having no meat:
 There is no living heart will pity her,
 Bloody with ravin, lean for lack of blood.
 Lo! if I feed her, who shall lose but I,
 And how can love lose doing of its kind
 Even to the uttermost?" Saying, Buddha
 Silently laid aside sandals and staff,
 His sacred thread, turban, and cloth, and came
 Forth from behind the milk-bush on the sand,
 Saying, "Ho! mother, here is meat for thee!"
 Whereat the perishing beast yelped hoarse and shrill,
 Sprang from her cubs, and, hurling to the earth
 That willing victim, had her feast of him
 With all the crooked daggers of her claws
 Rending his flesh, and all her yellow fangs
 Bathed in his blood: the great cat's burning breath
 Mixed with the last sigh of such fearless love.

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

Thereat
 Thrice round the Prince King Bimbisara paced,
 Reverently bending to the Master's feet,
 And bade him speed. So passed our Lord away
 Towards Uravilva, not yet comforted,
 And wan of face, and weak with six years' quest.

But they upon the hill and in the grove—
Alāra, Udra, and the ascetics five—
Had stayed him, saying all was written clear
In holy *Shastras*, and that none might win
Higher than *Sruti* and than *Smriti*—nay,
Not the chief saints!—for how should mortal man
Be wiser than the *Jnāna-Kānd*, which tells
How *Brahma* is bodiless and actionless,
Passionless, calm, unqualified, unchanged,
Pure life, pure thought, pure joy? Or how should man
Be better than the *Karma-Kānd*, which shows
How he may strip passion and action off,
Break from the bond of self, and so, unsphered,
Be God, and melt into the vast divine,
Flying from false to true, from wars of sense
To peace eternal, where the silence lives?

But the Prince heard them, not yet comforted.