

BOOK THE SEVENTH

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

But on a day in the *Vasanta*-time,
 When silver sprays swing on the mango-trees
 And all the earth is clad with garb of spring,
 The Princess sate by that bright garden-stream
 Whose gliding glass, bordered with lotus-cups,
 Mirrored so often in the bliss gone by
 Their clinging hands and meeting lips. Her lids
 Were wan with tears, her tender cheeks had thinned,
 Her lips' delicious curves were drawn with grief

The lustrous glory of her hair was hid—
 Close-bound as widows use; no ornament
 She wore, nor any jewel clasped the cloth—
 Coarse, and of mourning-white—crossed on her breast.
 Slow moved and painfully those small fine feet
 Which had the roe's gait and the rose-leaf's fall
 In old years at the loving voice of him.
 Her eyes, those lamps of love,—which were as if
 Sunlight should shine from out the deepest dark,
 Illumining Night's peace with Daytime's glow
 Unlighted now, and roving aimlessly,
 Scarce marked the clustering signs of coming Spring
 So the silk lashes drooped over their orbs.
 In one hand was a girdle thick with pearls,
 Siddhārtha's—treasured since that night he fled.
 (Ah, bitter Night! mother of weeping days!
 When was fond Love so pitiless to love,
 Save that this scorned to limit love by life?)
 The other led her little son, a boy
 Divinely fair, the pledge Siddhārtha left—
 Named Rahula—now seven years old, who tripped
 Gladsome beside his mother, light of heart
 To see the spring-blooms burgeon o'er the world.

So while they lingered by the lotus-pools
 And, lightly laughing, Rahula flung rice
 To feed the blue and purple fish, and she
 With sad eyes watched the swiftly-flying cranes,
 Sighing, "O creatures of the wandering wing,
 If ye shall light where my dear Lord is hid,
 Say that Yasōdhara lives nigh to death

For one word of his mouth, one touch of him"—
 So, as they played and sighed—mother and child
 Came some among the damsels of the Court
 Saying, "Great Princess! there have entered in
 At the south gate merchants of Hastinpur
 Tripusha called and Bhalluk, men of worth,
 Long travelled from the loud sea's edge, who bring
 Marvellous lovely webs pictured with gold,
 Waved blades of gilded steel, wrought bowls in brass,
 Cut ivories, spice, simples, and unknown birds
 Treasures of far-off peoples; but they bring
 That which doth bēggar these, for He is seen!
 Thy Lord,—our Lord,—the hope of all the land—
 Siddhārtha! they have seen him face to face,
 Yea, and have worshipped him with knees and brows,
 And offered offerings; for he is become
 All which was shown, a Teacher of the wise,
 World-honoured, holy, wonderful; a Buddha
 Who doth deliver men and save all flesh
 By sweetest speech and pity vast as Heaven:
 And, lo! he journeyeth hither, these do say."

Then—while the glad blood bounded in her veins
 As Gunga leaps when first the mountain snows
 Melt at her springs—uprose Yasōdhara
 And clapped her palms, and laughed, with brimming
 tears
 Beading her lashes. "Oh! call quick," she cried,
 "These merchants to my *pardah*, for mine ears
 Thirst like parched throats to drink their blessed news.
 Go bring them in,—but if their tale be true,
 Say I will fill their girdles with much gold,

With gems that kings shall envy; come ye too,
 My girls, for ye shall have guerdon of this
 If there be gifts to speak my grateful heart."

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

Then answer made Tripusha: "We have seen
 That sacred Master, Princess! we have bowed
 Before his feet; for who was lost a Prince
 Is found a greater than the King of kings.
 Under the Bōdhi-tree by Phalgu's bank
 That which shall save the world hath late been wrought
 By him—the Friend of all, the Prince of all—
 Thine most, High Lady! from whose tears men win
 The comfort of this Word the Master speaks.
 Lo! he is well, as one beyond all ills,
 Uplifted as a god from earthly woes,
 Shining with risen Truth, golden and clear.
 Moreover as he entereth town by town,
 Preaching those noble ways which lead to peace,
 The hearts of men follow his path as leaves

Troop to the wind or sheep draw after one
 Who knows the pastures. We ourselves have heard
 By Gaya in the green Tchirnika grove
 Those wondrous lips and done them reverence:
 He cometh hither ere the first rains fall."

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

Then Bhalluk told
 Such as the people of the valleys knew
 Of that dread night of conflict, when the air
 Darkened with fiendish shadows, and the earth
 Quaked, and the waters swelled with Mara's wrath.
 Also how gloriously that morning broke
 Radiant with rising hopes for man, and how
 The Lord was found rejoicing 'neath his Tree.
 But many days the burden of release—
 To be escaped beyond all storms of doubt,
 Safe on Truth's shore—lay, spake he, on that heart
 A golden load; for how shall men—Buddha mused—
 Who love their sins and cleave to cheats of sense,
 And drink of error from a thousand springs,
 Having no mind to see, nor strength to break
 The fleshly snare which binds them—how should such
 Receive the Twelve Nidānas and the Law
 Redeeming all, yet strange to profit by,
 As the caged bird oft shuns its opened door?
 So had we missed the helpful victory

If, in this earth without a refuge, Buddha,
 Winning the way had deemed it all too hard
 For mortal feet, and passed, none following him.
 Yet pondered the compassion of our Lord,
 But in that hour there range a voice as sharp
 As cry of travail, so as if the earth
 Moaned in birth-throe "*Nasyami aham bhū*
Nasyati lōka!" SURELY I AM LOST,
 I AND MY CREATURES: then a pause, and next
 A pleading sigh born on the western wind,
 "*Sruyatām dharma, Bhagwat!*" OH SUPREME!
LET THY GREAT LAW BE UTTERED! Whereupon
 The Master cast his vision forth on flesh,
 Saw who should hear and who must wait to hear,
 As the keen Sun gilding the lotus-lakes
 Seeth which buds will open to his beams
 And which are not yet risen from their roots;
 Then spake, divinely smiling, "Yea! I preach!
 Whoso will listen let him learn the Law."

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

But, of the Rishis, first Kaundinya
 Owned the Four Truths and entered on the Paths;
 And after him Bhadraka, Asvajit,

Bassav, Mahanāma; also there
 Within the Deer-park, at the feet of Buddha,
 Yasad the Prince with nobles fifty-four
 Hearing the blessed word our Master spake
 Worshipped and followed; for there sprang up peace
 And knowledge of a new time come for men
 In all who heard, as spring the flowers and grass
 When water sparkles through a sandy plain.

These sixty—said they—did our Lord send forth,
 Made perfect in restraint and passion-free,
 To teach the Way; but the World-honoured turned
 South from the Deer-park and Isipatan
 To Yashti and King Bimbasāra's realm,
 Where many days he taught; and after these
 King Bimbasāra and his folk believed,
 Learning the law of love and ordered life.
 Also he gave the Master, of free gift—
 Pouring forth water on the hands of Buddha—
 The Bamboo-Garden, named Wéluvana,
 Wherein are streams and caves and lovely glades;
 And the King set a stone there, carved with this:

*Yé dharmā hetuppabhawá
 Yesan hétun Tathāgatō;
 Aha yesan cha yo nirodhō
 Ewan wadi Maha samano.*

“What life's course and cause sustain
 These *Tathāgato* made plain;
 What delivers from life's woe
 That our Lord hath made us know.”

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

*Sabba pápassa akaranan;
 Kusalassa upasampadá;
 Sa chitta pariyodapanan;
 Etān Budhānusāsanan.*

“Evil swells the debts to play,
 Good delivers and acquits;
 Shun evil, follow good; hold sway
 Over thyself. This is the Way.”

Whom, when they ended, speaking so of him,
 With gifts, and thanks which made the jewels dull,
 The Princess recompensed. “But by what road
 Wendeth my Lord?” she asked: the merchants said,
 “*Yōjans* threescore stretch from the city-walls
 To Rajagriha, whence the easy path
 Passeth by Sona hither, and the hills.
 Our oxen, treading eight slow *koss* a day,
 Came in one moon.”

Then the King, hearing word,
 Sent nobles of the Court—well-mounted lords—
 Nine separate messengers, each embassy
 Bidden to say: “The King *Suddhōdana*—
 Nearer the pyre by seven long years of lack,
 Wherethrough he hath not ceased to seek for thee—

Prays of his son to come unto his own,
 The Throne and people of his longing Realm,
 Lest he shall die and see thy face no more."
 Also nine horsemen sent Yasōdhara
 Bidden to say, "The Princess of thy House—
 Rahula's mother—craves to see thy face
 As the night-blowing moon-flower's swelling heart
 Pines for the moon, as pale asōka-buds
 Wait for a woman's foot: if thou hast found
 More than was lost, she prays her part in this,
 Rahula's part, but most of all thyself."
 So sped the Sākya Lords, but it befell
 That each one, with the message in his mouth,
 Entered the Bamboo-Garden in that hour
 When Buddha taught his Law; and—hearing—each
 Forgot to speak, lost thought of King and quest,
 Of the sad Princess even; only gazed
 Eye-rapt upon the Master; only hung
 Heart-caught upon the speech, compassionate,
 Commanding, perfect, pure, enlightening all,
 Poured from those sacred lips. Look! like a bee
 Winged for the hive, who sees the mōgras spread
 And scents their utter sweetness on the air,
 If he be honey-filled, it matters not;
 If night be nigh, or rain, he will not heed;
 Needs must he light on those delicious blooms
 And drain their nectar; so these messengers
 One with another, hearing Buddha's words,
 Let go the purpose of their speed, and mixed,
 Heedless of all, amid the Master's train.
 Wherefore the King bade that Udayi go—

Chiefest in all the Court, and faithfullest,
 Siddhārtha's playmate in the happier days—
 Who, as he drew anear the garden, plucked
 Blown tufts of tree-wool from the grove and sealed
 The entrance of his hearing; thus he came
 Safe through the lofty peril of the place,
 And told the message of the King, and hers.
 Then meekly bowed his head and spake our Lord
 Before the people: "Surely I shall go!
 It is my duty as it was my will;
 Let no man miss to render reverence
 To those who lend him life, wherby come means
 To live and die no more, but safe attain
 Blissful Nirvāna, if ye keep the Law,
 Purgings past wrong and adding nought thereto,
 Complete in love and lovely charities.
 Let the King know and let the Princess hear
 I take the way forewith." This told, the folk
 Of white Kapilavastu and its fields
 Made ready for the entrance of their Prince.
 At the south gate a bright pavilion rose
 With flower-wreathed pillars and the walls of silk
 Wrought on their red and green with woven gold.
 Also the roads were laid with scented boughs
 Of *neem* and mango, and full mussuks shed
 Sandal and jasmine on the dust, and flags
 Fluttered; and on the day when he should come
 It was ordained how many elephants—
 With silver *howdahs* and their tusks gold-tipped—
 Should wait beyond the ford, and where the drums
 Should boom "Siddhārtha cometh!" where the lords

Should light and worship, and the dancing-girls
 Where they should strew their flowers with dance and
 song
 So that the steed he rode might tramp knee-deep
 In rose and balsam, and the ways be fair;
 While the town rang with music and high joy.
 This was ordained and all men's ears were pricked
 Dawn after dawn to catch the first drum's beat
 Announcing, "Now he cometh!"

But it fell—
 Eager to be before —Yasōdhara
 Rode in her litter to the city-walls
 Where soared the bright pavilion. All around
 A beautiful garden smiled—Nigrōdha named—
 Shaded with bel-trees and the green-plumed dates,
 New-trimmed and gay with winding walks and banks
 Of fruits and flowers; for the southern road
 Skirted its lawns, on this hand leaf and bloom,
 On that the suburb-huts where base-borns dwelt
 Outside the gates, a patient folk and poor,
 Whose touch for *Kshatriya* and priest of *Brahm*.
 Were sore defilement. Yet those, too, were quick
 With expectation, rising ere the dawn
 To peer along the road, to climb the trees
 At far-off trumpet of some elephant,
 Or stir of temple-drum; and when none came,
 Busied with lowly chores to please the Prince:
 Sweeping their door-stones, setting forth their flags,
 Stringing the fruited fig-leaves into chains,
 New furbishing the Lingam, decking new

Yesterday's faded arch of boughs, but aye
 Questioning wayfarers if any noise
 Be on the road of great Siddhārtha. These
 The Prince marked with lovely languid eyes,
 Watching, as they, the southward plain, and bent
 Like them to listen if the passers gave
 News of the path. So fell it she beheld
 One slow approaching with his head close shorn,
 A yellow cloth over his shoulder cast,
 Girt as the hermits, are, and in his hand
 An earthen bowl, shaped melonwise, the which
 Meekly at each hut-door he held a space,
 Taking the granted dole with gentle thanks
 And all as gently passing where none gave.
 Two followed him wearing the yellow robe,
 But he who bore the bowl so lordly seemed,
 So reverend, and with such a passage moved,
 With so commanding presence filled the air,
 With such sweet eyes of holiness smote all,
 That as they reached him alms the givers gazed
 Awestruck upon his face, and some bent down
 In worship, and some ran to fetch fresh gifts,
 Grieved to be poor; till slowly, group by group,
 Children and men and women drew behind
 Into his steps, whispering with covered lips,
 "Who is he? who? when looked a Rishi thus?"
 But as he came with quiet footfall on
 Nigh the pavilion, lo! the silken door
 Lifted, and, all unveiled, Yasōdhara
 Stood in his path crying, "Siddhārtha! Lord!"

With wide eyes streaming and with close-clasped hands,
Then sobbing fell upon his feet, and lay.

Aferwards, when this weeping lady passed
Into the Noble paths, and one had prayed
Answer from Buddha wherefore—being vowed
Quit of all mortal passion and the touch,
Flower-soft and conquering, of a woman's hands—
He suffered such embrace, the Master said:
"The greater beareth with the lesser love
So it may raise it unto easier heights.
Take heed that no man, being 'scaped from bonds,
Vexeth bound souls with boasts of liberty.
Free are ye rather that your freedom spread
By patient winning and sweet wisdom's skill.
Three eras of long toil bring *Bodhisāts*—
Who will be guides and help this darkling world—
Unto deliverance and the first is named
Of deep 'Resolve', the second of 'Attempt',
The third of 'Nomination'. Lo! I lived
In era of Resolve, desiring good,
Searching for wisdom, but mine eyes were sealed.
Count the grey seeds on yonder castor-clump—
So many rains it is since I was Ram,
A merchant of the coast which looketh south
To Lanka and the hiding-place of pearls.
Also in that far time *Yasōdhara*
Dwelt with me in our village by the sea,
Tender as now, and *Lakshmi* was her name.
And I remember how I journeyed thence
Seeking our gain, for poor the household was

And lowly. Not the less with wistful tears
She prayed me that I should not part, nor tempt
Perils by land and water. 'How could love
Leave what it loved?' she wailed; yet venturing, I
Passed to the Straits, and after storm and toil
And deadly strife with creatures of the deep,
And woes beneath the midnight and the noon,
Searching the wave I won therefrom a pearl
Moonlike and glorious, such as Kings might buy
Emptying their treasury. Then came I glad
Unto mine hills, but over all that land
Famine spread sore; ill was I stead to live
In journey home, and hardly reach my door—
Aching for food—with that white wealth of the sea
Tied in my girdle. Yet no food was there;
And on the threshold she for whom I toiled—
More than myself—lay with her speechless lips
Nigh unto death for one small gift of grain.
Then cried I, 'If there be who hath of grain,
Here is a kingdom's ransom for one life:
Give *Lakshmi* bread and take my moonlight pearl.'
Whereat one brought the last of all his hoard,
Millet—three seers—and clutched the beautiful thing.
But *Lakshmi* lived and sighed with gathered life,
'Lo! thou didst love indeed! I spent my pearl
Well in that life to comfort heart and mind
Else quite uncomforted; but these pure pearls,
My last great gain, won from a deeper wave—
The Twelve *Nidānas* and the Law of Good—
Cannot be spent, nor dimmed, and most fulfil
Their perfect beauty being freeliest given.

For like as is to Meru yonder hill
 Heaped by the little ants, and like as dew
 Dropped in the footmark of a bounding roe
 Unto the shoreless seas, so was that gift
 Unto my present giving; and so love—
 Vaster in being free from toils of sense—
 Was wisest stooping to the weaker heart;
 And so the feet of sweet Yasôdhara
 Passed into peace and bliss, being softly led.”

But when the King heard how Siddhârtha came
 Shorn, with the mendicant's sad-coloured cloth,
 And stretching out a bowl to gather orts
 From base-borns' leavings, wrathful sorrow drone
 Love from his heart; Thrice on the ground he spat,
 Plucked at his silvered beard, and strode straight forth
 Lackeyed by trembling lords. Frowning he clomb
 Upon his war-horse, drove the spurs, and dashed,
 Angered, through wondering streets lanes of folk.
 Scarce finding breath to say, “The King! bow down!”
 Ere the loud cavalcade had clattered by:
 Which—at the turning by the Temple-wall
 Where the south gate was seen—encountered full
 A mighty crowd; to every edge of it
 Poured fast more people, till the roads were lost,
 Blotted by that huge company which thronged
 And grew, close following him whose look serene
 Met the old King's. Nor lived the father's wrath
 Longer than while the gentle eyes of Buddha
 Lingered in worship on his troubled brows,
 Then downcast sank, with his true knee, to earth

In proud humility. So dear it seemed
 To see the Prince, to know him whole, to mark
 That glory greater than of earthly state
 Crowning his head, that majesty which brought
 All men, so awed and silent, in his steps.
 Nathless, the King broke forth: “Ends it in this,
 That great Siddhârtha steals into his realm,
 Wrapped in a clout, shorn, sandalled, craving food
 Of low-borns, he whose life was as a god's?
 My son! heir of this spacious power, and heir
 Of Kings who did but clap their palms to have
 What earth could give or eager service bring?
 Thou should'st have come apparelled in thy rank,
 With shining spears and tramp of horse and foot.
 Lo! all my soldiers camped upon the road,
 And all my city waited at the gates;
 Where hast thou sojourned through these evil years
 Whilst thy crowned father mourned? and she, too there
 Lived as the widows use, foregoing joys;
 Never once hearing sound of song or string,
 Nor wearing once the festal robe, till now
 When in her cloth of gold she welcomes home
 A beggar spouse in yellow remnants clad.
 Son! why is this?”

“My father!” came reply,
 “It is the custom of my race.”
 “Thy race,”
 Answered the King, “counteth a hundred thrones
 From Maha Sammât, but no deed like this.”

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

Then the King amazed
 Inquired "What treasure?" and the Teacher took
 Meekly the royal palm, and while they paced
 Through worshipping streets—the Princess and the King
 On either side—he told the things which make
 For peace and pureness, those Four noble Truths
 Which hold all wisdom as shores shut the seas,
 Those Eight right Rules whereby who will may walk—
 Monarch or slave—upon the perfect Path
 That hath its Stages Four and Precepts Eight,
 Whereby whoso will live—mighty or mean,
 Wise or unlearned, man, woman, young or old—
 Shall soon or late break from the wheels of life,
 Attaining blest Nirvāna. So they came
 Into the Palace-porch, Suddhōdana
 With brows unknit drinking the mighty words,

And in his own hand carrying Buddha's bowl,
 Whilst a new light brightened the lovely eyes
 Of sweet Yasōdhara and sunned her tears;
 And that night entered they the Way of Peace.