

BOOK THE EIGHTH

A BROAD mead spreads by swift Kohāna's bank
 At Nagara; five days shall bring a man
 In ox-wain thither from Benares' shrines
 Eastward and northward journeying. The horns
 Of white Himāla look upon the place,
 Which all the year is glad with blooms, and girt
 By groves made green from that bright streamlet's wave.
 Soft are its slopes and cool its fragrant shades,
 And holy all the spirit of the spot
 Unto this time: the breath of eve comes hushed
 Over the tangled thickets, and high heaps
 Of carved red stones cloven by root and stem
 Of creeping fig, and clad with weaving veil
 Of leaf and grass. The still snake glistens forth
 From crumbled work of *lac* and cedar-beams
 To coil his folds there on deep-graven slabs;
 The lizard dwells and darts o'er painted floors
 Where kings have paced; the grey fox litters safe
 Under the broken thrones; only the peaks,
 And stream, and sloping lawns, and gentle air
 Abide unchanged. All else, like all fair shows
 Of life, are fled—for this is where it stood,
 The city of Suddhōdana, the hill
 Whereon, upon an eve of gold and blue
 At sinking sun Lord Buddha set himself
 To teach the Law in hearing of his own.

Lo! ye shall read it in the Sacred Books
 How, being met in that glad pleasuance-place—
 A garden in old days with hanging walks,
 Fountains, and tanks, and rose-banked terraces
 Girdled by gay pavilions and the sweep
 Of stately palace-fronts—the Master sate
 Eminent, worshipped, all the earnest throng
 Watching the opening of his lips to learn
 That wisdom which hath made our Asia mild;
 Whereto four hundred, of living souls
 Witness this day. Upon the King's right hand
 He sate, and round were ranged the Sākya Lords
 Ananda, Devadatta—all the Court.
 Behind stood Seriyut and Mugallan, chiefs
 Of the calm brethren in the yellow garb,
 A goodly company. Between his knees
 Rahula smiled with wondering childish eyes
 Bent on the awful face, while at his feet
 Sate sweet Yasōdhara, her heartaches gone,
 Foreseeing that fair love which doth not feed
 On fleeting sense, that life which knows no age,
 That blessed last of deaths when Death is dead,
 His victory and hers. Wherefore she laid
 Her hand upon his hands, folding around
 Her silver shoulder-cloth his yellow robe,
 Nearest in all the world to him whose words
 The Three Worlds waited for. I cannot tell
 A small part of the splendid lore which broke
 From Buddha's lips: I am a late-come scribe
 Who love the Master and his love of men,
 And tell this legend, knowing he was wise,

But have not wit to speak beyond the books;
 And time hath blurred their script and ancient sense,
 Which once was new and mighty, moving all.
 A little of that large discourse I know
 Which Buddha spake on the soft Indian eve.
 Also I know it writ that they who heard
 Were more—lakhs more—crores more—than could be seen,
 For all the Devas and the Dead thronged there,
 Till Heaven was emptied to the seventh zone
 And uttermost dark Hells opened their bars;
 Also the daylight lingered past its time
 In rose-leaf radiance on the watching peaks,
 So that it seemed night listened in the glens,
 And noon upon the mountains; yea! they write,
 The evening stood between them like some maid
 Celestial, love-struck, rapt; the smooth-rolled clouds
 Her braided hair; the studded stars the pearls
 And diamonds of her coronal; the moon
 Her forehead-jewel, and the deepening dark
 Her woven garments. 'Twas her close-held breath
 Which came in scented sighs across the lawns
 While our Lord taught, and, while he taught, who heard—
 Though he were stranger in the land, or slave,
 High caste or low, come of the *Aryan* blood,
 Or *Mlech* or Jungle-dweller—seemed to hear
 What tongue his fellows talked. Nay, outside those
 Who crowded by the river, great and small,
 The birds and beasts and creeping things—'tis writ—
 Had sense of Buddha's vast embracing love

And took the promise of his piteous spech;
 So that their lives—prisoned in shape of ape,
 Tiger, or deer, shagged bear, jackal, or wolf,
 Foul-feeding kite, pearled dove, or peacock gemmed,
 Squat toad, or speckled serpent, lizard, bat;
 Yea, or of fish fanning the river waves—
 Touched, meekly at the skirts of brotherhood
 With man who hath less innocence than these;
 And in mute gladness knew their bondage broke
 Whilst Buddha spake these things before the King:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is not marred nor stayed in any use,
All liketh it; the sweet white milk it brings
To mothers' breasts; it brings the white drops, too,
Wherewith the young snake stings.
The ordered music of the marching orbs
It makes in viewless canopy of sky;
In deep abyss of earth it hides up gold,
Sards, sapphires, lazuli.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Also it issues forth to help or hurt.
 When Death the bitter murderer doth smite,
 Red roams the unpurged fragment of him, driven
 On wings of plague and blight.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

These words the Master spake of duties due
 To father, mother, children, fellows, friends;
 Teaching how such as may not swiftly break
 The clinging chains of sense—whose feet are weak

To tread the higher road—should order so
 This life of flesh that all their hither days
 Pass blameless in discharge of charities
 And first true footfalls in the Eightfold Path;
 Living pure, reverent, patient, pitiful,
 Loving all things which live even as themselves;
 Because what falls for ill is fruit of ill
 Wrought in the past, and what falls well of good;
 And that by howsomuch the householder
 Purgeth himself of self and he helps the world,
 By so much happier comes he to next stage,
 In so much bettered being. This he spake;
 As also long before, when our Lord walked
 By Rajagriha in the Bamboo-Grove:
 For on a dawn he walked there and beheld
 The householder Singāla, newly bathed,
 Bowing himself with bare head to the earth,
 To Heaven, and all four quarters; while he threw
 Rice, red and white, from both hands. "Wherefore thus
 Bowest thou, Brother?" said the Lord; and he,
 "It is the way, Great Sir! our fathers taught
 At every dawn, before the toil begins,
 To hold off evil from the sky above
 And earth beneath, and all the winds which blow."
 Then the World-honoured spake: "Scatter not rice,
 But offer loving thoughts and acts to all.
 To parents as the East where rises light;
 To teachers as the South whence rich gifts come;
 To wife and children as the West where gleam
 Colours of love and calm, and all days end;

To friends and kinsmen and all men as North;
 To humblest living things beneath, to Saints
 And Angels and the blessed Dead above;
 So shall all evil be shut off, and so
 The six main quarters will be safely kept."

But to his own, Them of the yellow robe—
 They who, as wakened eagles, soar with scorn
 From life's low vale, and wing towards the Sun—
 To these he taught the Ten Observances
 The *Dasa-Sil*, and how a mendicant
 Must know the *Three Doors* and the *Triple Thoughts*;
 The *Sixfold States of Mind*, the *Fivefold Powers*;
 The *Eight High Gates of Purity*; the *Modes*
Of Understanding; *Iddhi*; *Upekshā*;
 The *Five Great Meditations*, which are food
 Sweeter than *Amrit* for the holy soul;
 The *Jhānas* and the *Three Chief Refuges*.
 Also he taught his own how they should dwell;
 How live, free from the snares of love and wealth;
 What eat and drink and carry—three plain cloths,—
 Yellow, of stitched stuff, won with shoulder bare—
 A girdle, almsbowl, strainer. Thus he laid
 The great foundations of our *Sangha* well,
 That noble Order of the Yellow Robe
 Which to this day standeth to help the World.

So all that night he spake, teaching the Law:
 And on no eyes fell sleep—for they who heard
 Rejoiced with tireless joy. Also the King,
 When this was finished, rose upon his throne
 And with bared feet bowed low before his Son

Kissing his hem; and said, "Take me, O Son!
 Lowest and least of all thy Company."
 And sweet Yasōdhara, all happy now,—
 Cried "Give to Rahula—thou Blessed One!
 The Treasure of the Kingdom of thy Word
 For his inheritance." Thus passed these Three
 Into the Path.

Here endeth what I write
 Who love the Master for his love of us.
 A little knowing, little have I told
 Touching the Teacher and the Ways of Peace.
 Forty-five rains thereafter showed he those
 In many lands and many tongues, and gave
 Our Asia Light, that still is beautiful,
 Conquering the world with spirit of strong grace:
 All which is written in the holy Books,
 And where he passed and what proud Emperors
 Carved his sweet words upon the rocks and caves.
 And how—in fulness of the times—it fell
 The Buddha died, the great *Tathāgato*,
 Even as a man 'mongst men, fulfilling all:
 And how a thousand thousand lakhs since then
 Have trod the Path which leads whither he went
 Unto NIRVĀNA where the Silence lives.
 AH! BLESSED LORD! OH! HIGH DELIVERER!
 FORGIVE THIS FEEBLE SCRIPT, WHICH DOTHTH THEE WRONG,
 MEASURING WITH LITTLE WIT THY LOFTY LOVE.
 AH! LOVER! BROTHER! GUIDE! LAMP OF THE LAW!
 I TAKE MY REFUGE IN THY NAME AND THEE!

I TAKE MY REFUGE IN THY LAW OF GOOD!
 I TAKE MY REFUGE IN THY ORDER! OM!
 THE DEW IS ON THE LOTUS! — RISE, GREAT SUN!
 AND LIFT MY LEAF AND MIX ME WITH THE WAVE.
 OM MANI PADME HUM, THE SUNRISE COMES!
 THE DEWDROP SLIPS INTO THE SHINING SEA!