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Edwin Arnold

His Services to Buddhism

William Peiris



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by

William Peiris

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Author's Note

The idea of this booklet on Sir Edwin Arnold, the celebrated author of *The Light of Asia*, originated with two esteemed personalities—the Venerable Nyanaponika Maha Thera of the Forest Hermitage, Kandy, and Mr M. P. Amarasuriya, M.A. (Cantab.) of Colombo.

The booklet marks the ninetieth anniversary of the first publication of *The Light of Asia* in 1879. By inviting me to write this booklet they did me great honour. They facilitated my work by supplying me with some rare material.

This is not a biography of Arnold in the strict sense of the word, but a Buddhist journalist's brief record of Arnold's great services to Buddhism and his remarkable life.

My task was made easy by my good friend, Mr Ashley Perera, and Dr Brooks Wright of New York; the former placed his magnificent library at my disposal, and the latter readily gave me permission to paraphrase passages from his excellent book, *Edwin Arnold—The Interpreter of Buddhism to the West*, and to quote from it. To them I am deeply grateful.

I am also thankful to various authors and publishers for granting me permission to use copyright material.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr Francis Story (Anagarika Sugatananda), an Englishman who is actively engaged in spreading the Buddha Dharma by his numerous publications, for reading my typescript with a critical eye and for making a few valuable suggestions.

Mr W. B. Somaratne of the Ceylon Administrative Service, my daughters, Miss Savitri Peiris, Miss Surangani Peiris, B.A. (Ceylon) and Miss Manjari Peiris, and my wife assisted me in various ways. I am thankful to them.

Finally, I am alone responsible for any factual mistakes.

William Peiris
Dehiwala 1970

Edwin Arnold

His Services to Buddhism



Edwin Arnold has a just claim to grateful remembrance by Buddhists all over the world for his great services to Buddhism. Quite apart from his delightful poem *The Light of Asia* which made the Buddha's teaching widely known and accepted in the West in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, he

initiated the idea of restoring Buddha-Gaya to Buddhists, its rightful owners. The idea at once caught the imagination of Buddhists, particularly that of a wealthy young man of Colombo, David Hewavitarne (later Anāgārika Dharmapāla), who with the co-operation of his fellow Sinhala Buddhists and broadminded Hindu Indians, launched a vigorous movement for the purpose of achieving the object, culminating in the establishment of the Mahabodhi Society of India and Ceylon in 1891. Arnold himself lent his whole-hearted support to the cause.

The Light of Asia

Arnold brought out *The Light of Asia* in 1879. The book achieved a phenomenal success. It has had a wider circulation than any other book on Buddhism. The first edition was an instant success. It was followed by a second within the year.

Five years after the appearance of the original edition Arnold revised the text, and the new revisions appear in all the authorised editions since 1885. By that year the publisher, Trubner, had issued over 30 editions. American pirated editions, however, continued to use the old text for many years. As English works were unprotected in the United States by copyright, these pirated editions could not be halted.

England has published sixty editions and America, where the book was more widely read than even in England, has brought out eighty editions. The estimated sales exceed a million copies. The book is still listed by publishers and booksellers.

The book contains an absorbingly interesting preface by the author. It is worth quoting in full. Let me do so.

“In the following poem I have sought, by the

medium of an imaginary Buddhist votary, to depict the life and character and indicate the philosophy of that noble hero and reformer, Prince Gautama of India, the founder of Buddhism.

“A generation ago little or nothing was known in Europe of this great faith of India, which had nevertheless existed during twenty-four centuries, and at this day surpasses, in the number of its followers and the area of its prevalence, any other form of creed. Four hundred and seventy millions of our race live and die in the tenets of Gautama; and the spiritual dominions of this ancient teacher extend, at the present time, from Nepal and Ceylon, over the whole Eastern peninsula, to China, Japan, Tibet, Central Asia, Siberia, and even Swedish Lapland. India itself might fairly be included in this magnificent Empire of Belief; for though the profession of Buddhism has for the most part passed away from the land of its birth, the mark of Gautama’s sublime teaching is stamped ineffaceably upon modern Brahmanism, and the most characteristic habits and convictions of the Hindus are clearly due to the benign influence of Buddha’s precepts. More than one third of mankind, therefore, owe their moral and religious ideas to this illustrious prince, whose personality, though imperfectly revealed in the existing sources of information, cannot but appear the highest, gentlest, holiest, and

most beneficent, with one exception, in the history of Thought. Discordant in frequent particulars, and sorely overlaid by corruptions, inventions, and misconceptions, the Buddhistical works yet agree in the one point of recording nothing—no single act or word—which mars the perfect purity and tenderness of this Indian teacher, who united the truest princely qualities with the intellect of a sage and the passionate devotion of a martyr.

“Even M. Barthelemy St. Hilaire, totally misjudging, as he does, many points of Buddhism, is well cited by Professor Max Muller as saying of Prince Siddhartha: ‘His life was utterly stainless...His constant heroism equalled his conviction; and although the doctrine that he propounded is false, the personal examples that he gave are irreproachable. He is the perfect model of all the virtues that he preached; his abnegation, his charity, his unalterable gentleness never failed for a single instant...In silence he prepared his doctrine during six years of retreat and meditation; he propagated it solely by the power of the word and of persuasion during more than half a century, and when he died in the arms of his disciples it was with the serenity of a sage, who was certain that he had found the truth’. (The above translation of the French quotation is by Mr Francis Story.) To Gautama has consequently been granted this stupendous conquest of humanity; and—though

he discountenanced ritual, and declared himself, even when on the threshold of Nirvana, to be only what all other men might become—the love and gratitude of Asia, disobeying his mandate, have given him fervent worship. Forests of flowers are daily laid upon his stainless shrines, and countless millions of lips daily repeat the formula 'I take refuge in Buddha.'

“The Buddha of this poem—if, as need not be doubted, really existed—was born on the borders of Nepal about 620 B.C. and died about 543 B.C. at Kusinagara in Oudh. In point of age, therefore, most other creeds are youthful compared with this venerable religion, which has in it the eternity of a universal hope, the immortality of a boundless love, an indestructible element of faith in final good, and the proudest assertion ever made of human freedom. The extravagances which disfigure the record and the practise of Buddhism are to be referred to that inevitable degradation which priesthoods always inflict upon great ideas committed to their charge. The power and sublimity of Gautama's original doctrine should be estimated by their influence, not by their interpreters; nor by that innocent but lazy and ceremonious Church which has arisen on the foundations of the Buddhistic Brotherhood or 'Sangha'.

Why An Imaginary Votary

“I have put my poem into a Buddhist’s mouth, because, to appreciate the spirit of Asiatic thoughts, they should be regarded from the Oriental point of view; and neither the miracles which consecrate this record, nor the philosophy which it embodies, could have been otherwise so naturally reproduced. The doctrine of Transmigration, for instance, startling to modern minds, was established and thoroughly accepted by the Hindus of Buddha’s time; that period when Jerusalem was being taken by Nebuchadnezzar, when Nineveh was falling to the Medes, Marseilles was founded by the Phocæans. The exposition here offered of so antique a system is of necessity incomplete, and—in obedience to the laws of poetic art—passes rapidly by many matters philosophically most important, as well as over the long ministry of Gautama. But my purpose has been obtained if any just conception be here conveyed of the lofty character of this noble prince, and of the general purport of his doctrines. As to these latter there has arisen prodigious controversy among the erudite, who will be aware that I have taken the imperfect Buddhistic citations much as they stand in Spence Hardy’s work, and have also modified more than one passage in the received narratives. The

views, however, here indicated of 'Nirvana,' 'Dharma,' 'Karma,' and other chief features of Buddhism, are at least the fruits of considerable study, and also of a firm conviction that a third of mankind would never have been brought to believe in blank abstractions, or in Nothingness as the issue and crown of Being.

“Finally, in reverence to the illustrious Promulgator of this *Light of Asia*, and in homage to the many eminent scholars who have devoted noble labours to his memory, for which both repose and ability are wanting to me, I beg that the shortcomings of my too-hurried study may be forgiven. It has been composed in the brief intervals of days without leisure, but is inspired by an abiding desire to aid in the better mutual knowledge of East and West. The time may come, I hope, when this book and my *Indian Song of Songs*, will preserve the memory of one who loved India and the Indian peoples.”

A Review of the Poem

Now, let me give a brief review of the poem. The book covers 177 pages, excluding the author's preface and an introduction by Sir E. Denison Ross, Director of the London

School of Oriental Studies for the first twenty years of its existence. There are some 5,300 lines of verse and 41,000 words. The poem is divided into eight books.

Book the First deals with the legendary birth of Gotama and the episodes of his childhood and boyhood.

The story from his eighteenth year up to his winning Yasodharā after a gruelling contest in physical prowess is told in Book the Second.

Book the Third is filled with details of the luxurious life he led with Yasodharā in the three palaces his royal father had provided for the three seasons of the year, his growing discontent with the life he led and his encounter with an old man, a sick man, a funeral procession and a yellow-robed recluse, despite his father's safeguards against such sights.

His Great Renunciation—his parting glance at his sleeping wife and babe before he set out of his palace at midnight in search of the cure for the ills of life—his arrival at Rājagaha, King Bimbisāra's capital, and other episodes are narrated in Book the Fourth.

Book the Fifth details Gotama's self-mortifications in the company of other ascetics which led to his collapse from utter starvation, and his drinking milk which a cowherd offered him. [1]

Sujāthā's gift of milk rice which Gotama partook, his conquest of Māra's forces of evil and his attainment of Buddhahood under the shade of the Bodhi tree are the

incidents dealt with in Book the Sixth.

Book the Seventh records King Suddhodana's grief over his son's disappearance from his kingdom for seven years, Yasodharā's anguish over the absence of her husband Siddhartha, the seven-year-old Rāhula's queries about his father, the arrival of Tapassu and Balluka, the two merchants who had listened to a sermon by Gotama the Buddha at Uruvelā, which gladdened the hearts of Yasodharā and Suddhodana, Gotama's homecoming, Yasodharā's tearful welcome and other stories.

The establishment of the Order of Bhikkhus and expositions of the doctrine are dealt with in Book the Eighth.

From beginning to end, the poem is a vivid, moving tale, which grips the reader's attention. For example, the story of Kisāgotamī—the parable of the mustard seed—rendered into blank verse in *The Light of Asia* is one of the most striking pieces in Buddhist literature. In Arnold's words it runs as follows:

The Story of Kisāgotamī

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 alone and reared my child; but he
Straying amid the blossoms found a snake,
Which twined about his wrist, whilst he did laugh
And teased the quick-forked tongue and opened mouth
Of that cold playmate. But, alas! ere long
He turned so pale and 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 drew 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 Kisāgotamī! 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 friend's 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 my 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 this seed and find no death,
If now, indeed, my babe 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 that lovedst slept
Dead on thy bosom yesterday: today
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 cure
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.”

Denison Ross on the Poem

Sir Denison Ross, in his introduction to the poem, states:

“That *The Light of Asia*, with its unfamiliar setting, its strange names and its Sanskrit terminology should have met with an immediate success, is proof enough that the story was well told and that the poem had incontestable merit. The moral doctrines of the Buddha were those familiar to the West, but the Indian scenery and imagery were new to many, while the actual life of Gautama presented a figure of perfect virtue whose existence came to thousands of readers almost as a revelation. The work was quickly translated into all the principal languages of Europe, and there have been upwards of sixty editions in England and eighty editions in America. Though it has an assured place in every large library, it has not enjoyed any continued popularity, and is today probably very little read. This, I think, is to be regretted, for although the poetry is uneven in quality, it contains many passages of compelling beauty, and still remains the best description of the life of Gautama Buddha in our language...

“A few years later the Pali canon was discovered in Ceylon, and the story of Buddhism as taught and practised in that island resulted in the learned works of such men as Spence Hardy and Rhys Davids. In our own day, when so many popular books on Buddhism exist, it is difficult for us to realise how little was known in 1879, and how a new thing the life of the Buddha was to the first readers of Edwin

Arnold's poem. Small wonder that it was eagerly sought after and read. To some, indeed, it came as a shock that, five centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, a man had preached all the essential virtues of Christianity, but had held out a totally different reward for those who practised them...

"In *The Light of Asia* the author confines his narrative to the episodes in the early life of Gautama immediately prior to his attainment of Buddhahood. He tells us nothing of this Buddha's former existences while he was qualifying for Buddhahood." [2]

Denison Ross then explains at some length the differences between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, and states that *The Light of Asia* is only concerned with the actual teaching of Gautama Buddha as handed down in the earliest records of the 'Lesser Vehicle' and not with the controversial literature which sprang from the interpretation of that teaching.

The last sections of the poem are devoted to the teachings of the Buddha. Sir E. Denison Ross says that here "Edwin Arnold has attempted the impossible—that of epitomising, so as to be intelligible to the general reader, the meaning of the Four Noble Truths, of the Eightfold Path that leads to enlightenment, and finally of Nirvana."

He concludes: "Gautama taught that the way to attain the

dreamless sleep of Nirvana was to get rid of all desires, and this was to be achieved by understanding the Four Noble Truths. The chief reform he introduced was the abolition of sacrifices. He taught that there were better sacrifices to be made in the shape of giving alms and, best of all, in renouncing the world and becoming a monk. No better reward for virtue and renunciation from all consciousness.”

The Four Noble Truths

Here is Arnold’s epitome of the Four Noble Truths, and I let the reader judge whether or not it is intelligible.

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 grows 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 biran-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 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 arid 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
Assail 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 stairways 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 has the First Stage touched;
He knows the Noble Truths, the Eightfold Road;
By few or many steps such shall attain
Nirvana'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 Buddhs—
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 Doubts 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
Nirvana'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 'T':

If any teach Nirvana is to cease,
Say unto such they lie.

If any teach Nirvana 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 passions, 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!

The epitome does not end here, but proceeds to the Five Precepts, which Arnold gives in positive terms like the Christian commandments. He also explains in a nutshell the rest of the Buddha's teachings. Had a genius like Schopenhauer read this epitome, he might have written as big a book on Buddhism as his *World as Will and Representation*. But he was dead long before the poem was composed.

Three Jātaka Stories

Sir E. Denison Ross has in his introduction to the poem made a mistake in stating that, Arnold tells “nothing” of Gotama Buddha's previous existences of which as many as 550 are recorded in the canon. [3] There are, in fact, three Jātaka stories in the poem, two of which concern the Buddha-to-be and Yasodharā; the other relates the story of

how Bodhisatta Gotama while preparing for Buddhahood sacrificed his life to feed a starving tigress and her cub. The first Jātaka story in the poem is about the first meeting of Prince Siddhartha and Princess Yasodharā at what may be described as a beauty parade at which Siddhartha gave away the prizes and Yasodharā won the best prize. This story is in Book the Second of the poem, and Arnold renders the Jātaka portion of the story into verse thus:

Long after—when enlightenment was full—
Lord Buddha, being prayed why thus his heart
Took fire at first glance of the Sakya 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 Nandadevī stands,
Sate 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 Yasodharā;
And while the wheel of birth and death turns round
That which hath been must be between us two.

The other Jātaka story about the Bodhisatta and Yasodharā occurs in Book the Seventh of the poem, and Arnold renders the story thus:

A Kingdom's Ransom for Her Life

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 Yasodharā
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 that land
Famine spread sore; ill was I stead to live
In journey home, and hardly reached 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 one 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 beauteous 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 Nidanas 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 Yasodharā
Passed into peace and bliss, being softly led.”

The third Jātaka story in the poem is in Book the Fifth, and runs as follows:

Here is Meat for Thee

...in an ancient age—when Buddha wore
A Brahman’s form, dwelling upon the rock
Named Munda, by the village of Dalida—
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 milk-less teats which rendered
nought;
While she, their gaunt dam, licked full motherly
The clamorous twins, and gave 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 ravine, 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?" So 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.

The Poem's Significant Ending

There is nothing in the poem more significant than its ending, which is an indirect avowal of Arnold's faith in Buddhism, despite the fact that he tells the story of *The Light of Asia* through a mouthpiece. The ending runs thus:

Ah! Blessed Lord! Oh, high Deliverer!
Forgive this feeble script, which doth 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!

Tinge of Mahāyāna

Arnold bases most of his story on the Theravada teaching. There is, however, a tinge of Mahayana in it. For example, *Om Mani Padme Hum*, which occurs in the ending of the poem, is definitely Mahayanist.

Again, the story of Kisāgotamī which he versifies is somewhat different from that found in the Pali canon. Not being a Mahayanist student, I cannot say definitely that this story is based on the Mahayana teaching: Either he has followed the Mahayana text or it is poetic licence. Undoubtedly he read a good deal of German translations of the Mahayana texts before he composed *The Light of Asia*, but the poem does not give any appreciable evidence of his having been influenced by the Mahāyāna teaching.

Criticism: Favourable & Hostile

The poem evoked favourable and hostile criticism alike. The great American writer Oliver Wendell Holmes, the author of the famous Breakfast Table Series, was fascinated by it. He considered it worthy to be classed with the New Testament. Richard Henry Stoddard compared its verses

with those of Rossetti, Swinburne and Matthew Arnold. Many others expressed their admiration for it. Among the critics of Arnold's style was Oscar Wilde, then at the height of his fame. The bitterest critic was W. C. Wilkinson, who made a virulent attack in a booklet entitled *Edwin Arnold as Poetizer and Paganizer*. He described Arnold as antichrist, and proceeded to say:

“The publication of Mr Arnold's work happened to coincide in time with a singular development, both in America and in Europe, of popular curiosity and interest concerning ethnic religions, especially concerning Buddhism. *The Light of Asia* was well adapted to hit this transient whim of Occidental taste. So I account, in part, for the instantaneous American popularity of the poem. At any rate, Mr Arnold has, no doubt, whether by merit or by fortune, been, beyond any other writer, the means of widening the American audience prepared to entertain with favour the pretention of Buddha and his teachings.

“The effect is very observable. There has entered the general mind an unconfessed, a half conscious, but a most shrewdly penetrative, misgiving that perhaps, after all, Christianity has not of right quite the exclusive claim that it was previously supposed to possess, upon the attention and reverence of mankind. A letting up of the sense of obligation, on the part of Christians, to Christianize the world, has followed. Nay, the individual Christian conscience

has, if I mistake not, been disposed to wear more lightly its own yoke of exclusive loyalty to Jesus.”

Mr Wilkinson, for all his venom, could not deny that *The Light of Asia* was immensely popular and had great influence.

Another who was greatly alarmed by the publication of *The Light of Asia* was a Mr Samuel Kellogg. He wrote a book to combat what he called 'the Buddhist menace,' in which he stated:

“The interest that has been taken of late in Buddhism by a large number of intelligent people in various Christian countries is one of the most peculiar and suggestive religious phenomena of our day. In the United States this interest has prevailed for a considerable time among a somewhat restricted number of persons who have known or thought that they knew something of Buddhism; but since 1879, through the publication of Mr Edwin Arnold’s *Light of Asia*, the popularity of the subject has in a very marked degree increased. Many who would have been repelled by any formal, drily philosophical treatise upon Buddhism, have been attracted to it by the undoubted charm of Mr. Arnold’s verse. The issue of cheap editions of this poem, selling for only a few cents, has helped in the same direction, as this has brought the poem, and with it the subject, to the attention of a large number of persons not yet sufficiently interested in Buddhism to have cared to pay much more.”

Arnold completely ignored all critics, for the popularity of the poem was its best defence.

Translations and Dramatisations

Eight years after its appearance *The Light of Asia* was translated into German by a keen student of Buddhism, Dr Arthur Pfungst, a founder-member of the International Buddhist Society. It was the first edition in a language other than English, and was made from the 24th English edition. Published in Leipzig in 1887, it was enthusiastically received by the German public. Konrad Wernicke made a second translation into German in 1891; with extensive notes. A third German edition entitled *Das Kleinod im Lotos* by Albrecht Schaeffer appeared in 1923. The poem was also translated into Dutch (1895), French (1899), Czech (1906), Italian (1909), and, later, Swedish and Esperanto.

Six bold writers attempted the difficult task of dramatising *The Light of Asia*. The first of these was Isidore de Lara, an English composer of Jewish extraction. Arnold himself lent his friendly interest. It was cast in the form of a cantata entitled *La Luce dell' Asia*. It evoked a very favourable impression. In a review Bernard Shaw said that the opera "abounds in vocal melody of exceptional excellence."

In the United States, the poem was dramatised as a play by a woman, Georgiana Jones Walton, and was first performed in 1918 in California. The play ran for thirty-five nights.

In all the poem was made into an opera, a play, two cantatas and a movie. The movie, *The Light of Asia*, was filmed in India, the Maharajah of Jaipur providing the costumes, elephants, camels and horses. It was shown in Boston in the United States in 1929.

These dramatisations along with the translations into more than half a dozen European languages added immensely to the popularity of the poem.

Arnold had other imitators as well. Inspired by *The Light of Asia*, a young undergraduate Sidney Arthur Alexander of Trinity College, Oxford, wrote *Sakya-Muni—The Story of Buddha* as the Newdigate Prize poem of 1887. But it did not reach the standard of Arnold's poem *The Feast of the Belshazzar*, which won the Newdigate Prize in 1852..

Biography of a Great Poet

Born on July 10th 1832; at Gravesend, Kent, Edwin Arnold was the second son of Robert Coles Arnold and Sarah Pizzey Arnold of Framfield, Sussex.

“In the case of great poets,” says Arnold's son, Lester, “one

is usually forced to the conclusion that they were born, not made, and my father was apparently no exception to this rule. I have before me a pedigree of his family going back into the mists of the middle ages, and in that long array of sturdy Kentish esquires and of comely wives who devoted their lives to the management of store cupboards and the production of numerous offspring, there is no hint of poetic tendencies in the race. Sir Edwin's genius came into being unexpectedly, unaccountably.

"His father, Robert Coles Arnold, was born in 1797, the youngest of twelve children by one mother," continues Lester. "Such a family meant hard work for the sons, a demand they proved equal to, and Robert Arnold died the master of a beautiful home, won by his own endeavour, and passed on to his four brilliant boys that ability to enjoy life linked with ceaseless labour, which distinguished them all.

"Edwin's boyhood was spent with his father and brothers on the farm of Southchurch Wick in Essex. The long, low rambling house still stands, part of it dating back to Saxon times, a domain of glorious freedom for the lads, where they revelled to their hearts' content in bird-nesting, in bat-fowling, at night in the ivy of the church close at hand, in rambles along the lonely landwalls with a first gun, that beloved possession of every healthy-minded youth, and in long summer evenings fishing in the moat encircling the Wick.

"Indeed I am inclined to think my father imbibed his first

love of nature in this district of green pastures fading away to the great North Sea beyond. I know at least that long afterwards he would take me, then a small boy, for days into this delectable country, pointing out with finite satisfaction the fascination of Essex lanes heavy with flowering hawthorns, or along the purple iris-haunted banks of the Church, and into the mysteries of the dull sea fens beyond with their lonely sands, stretching into the infinite. 'Nature is ever lovely, ever consoling,' he would say, 'the one thing to which you can always turn with a certainty of relief and sympathy.'

"When twelve years old my father went to a private school at Bexley Heath, and it is a curious instance of the insistence of genius on its special direction that though mathematics and little else were taught there, young Arnold made slow progress in figures, while his skill in poetry and classics astonished everyone. From this place of rudimentary learning he passed to Rochester Grammar School. There, in congenial surroundings, he quickly won his way to the front, honours falling to him so fast that he came to bear the nickname of 'all-absorbing Arnold.' In the midsummer examination of 1849, he won a scholarship and every available prize for English or Latin prose and verse."

His father, recognising the boy's gifts, sent him to London University, where he won a scholarship to University College, Oxford. There he had the rooms occupied by the poet Shelley. His first poem, *The Feast of the Belshazzar*, won the Newdigate Prize in 1852. He read it publicly at the

University, in accordance with custom, at the installation of Lord Derby as Chancellor. Disraeli, who listened to it, shook Arnold warmly by the hand and prophesied a brilliant future for him.

His first complete book of verse, *Poems Narrative and Lyrical*, appeared in 1853. In this work we can see the influence of Keats.

He was the second layman to give an address in Westminster Abbey, the first being Professor Max Muller.

At the age of 22 he married Catherine Biddulph, the sister of an undergraduate friend. After taking his degree, he secured a job as a master in King Edward VI School, Birmingham.

Reverence for Eastern Religions

Appointed Principal of Deccan College, Poona, at the age of 25, he landed in India in November, 1857, with his wife Catherine and babe Lester.

“The first letter he sent home is before me as I write,” says Lester. “It overflows with enthusiasm for the charm of the tropics and the vividness of native life. The gallops in the magic Indian dawns; the peace of star-lit nights; the infinitely varied scenery of the Poona plateau; the silence

and mystery of ancient temples; the allurements of still more ancient faiths of which they were the home; the largeness and novelty of everything delighted him beyond measure. His first stay in India was a holiday varied by the hard intellectual work essential to his nature, and without which indeed he could not be happy."

"This appointment counted for much in his intellectual and literary development, for it enabled him to foster that mingled reverence for the religions of the East and interest in the science of the West which is the mark of his later writings," states The Cabinet Portrait Gallery, 1893.

Arnold returned to England in 1861. In response to a newspaper advertisement he applied for and obtained appointment as a feature-writer on *The Daily Telegraph* shortly afterwards. Later he became editor and served the paper for forty years in all.

Meanwhile he had begun to write on a variety of subjects with the result that he had published quite a profusion of books—translations from Sanskrit, an essay on Greek poets, a treatise on education in India, a history in two volumes of the administration of Lord Dalhousie, Viceroy of India, a Turkish Grammar composed in 1877, when the Eastern Question was the great interest in British politics, an excursion into Mohammedanism in *Pearls from Islam's Rosary*, an elaborate poem founded on an episode in the *Bostan of the Persian Sa'aid*, and *Japonica*, sketches from Japan. He was a linguist and knew as many as nineteen

languages.

Development of Poetic Power

“The editorial chair of *The Daily Telegraph* might seem, at first sight, for one with the Eastern leanings of Sir Edwin Arnold, more suited to the cultivation of Persian flowers of style in English prose than to the production of true poetry,” states *The Cabinet Portrait Gallery*, 1893.

“Yet during his editorship his poetic power developed. *The Light of Asia* appeared in 1879, and at once, and deservedly, attained popularity. In it the profound spiritual teaching of the Buddha, interpreted according to the light of the author’s scholarship, was offered in a form of considerable beauty to the average reader, and thus satisfied the need for a popular account of the origin of a religion which has such a significant place in history. His attempt twelve years later to versify part of the Christian story in *The Light of the World* can hardly be regarded as a comparable work.”

This poem, however, is not the only evidence which Arnold had given of his interest in the problems which fascinated the finer minds of the day. In a striking volume, *Death and Afterwards*, he argues that it is reasonable to expect a future existence, for in the presence of the mysteries of life and

death, we may be as near a glad surprise as was Don Quixote, who, after hanging as he fancies, found that he had dropped just four inches. This bright expectation is only a mark of the hopefulness which is characteristic of Arnold's serious thoughts.

"His views are summed up in a letter to *The Daily Telegraph*, republished in his *Seas and Lands*, in which he recounts how, when travelling in Japan, he was called upon to address the assembled University of Tokyo. The contrast between the East and the West led him to turn his discourse upon the range of modern knowledge, and probably never before had poet or journalist so picturesque an opportunity for a confession of faith. As he spoke he looked not upon the immense city, covering with its small black houses as large an area as London. Before him sat or knelt the flower of the Japanese youth, eager to hear, and among them, 'with shaven heads and lappets of gold embroidery the calm brethren of the yellow robe'—Buddhist monks.

"First he directed the attention of this unique audience to astronomy and pointed out that the great religions of the World were promulgated under the idea that the earth was the center of things and that 'the stars were hardly more than pretty mysterious lanterns lighted to spangle our night time.' But, he continued, in reality the greatness of our destiny consists, not in our being the center of creation, but 'in belonging at all to so glorious and visible a galaxy of life, with the invisible effulgence and infinite possibilities beyond it.'"

At the time Arnold joined *The Daily Telegraph*, it was, in the words of his son Lester, “little better than two sheets of lengthy essays on incidents of the day, with a six-line telegram here and there and a sprinkling of advertisements on the back page.” Arnold had a big hand in the rapid rise of this great newspaper. During his connection with it, he contributed as many as 10,000 ‘leaders,’ besides doing a large amount of organising and administration.

“He planned and made possible the march of Stanley across Africa, and I well remember how that intrepid explorer would come to dine with us and eagerly discuss with my father the pros and cons of an expedition which, in its accomplishment, for the first time traced the source of the Congo from mouth to source, and uncovered Central Africa to the eyes of Europe,” says Lester.

“In 1893 he went to Constantinople to obtain the services of a technician from the Sultan of Turkey for excavation among buried cities of Assyria,” states Lester. “This adventure, financed by his paper, added to our national treasures a store of cuneiform tablets and carvings which opened a new and fascinating page of ancient history.”

How He Saved Lizards

Lester states: "In 1896 he journeyed to Moscow to attend the coronation of the ill-fated Czar of Russia, and a year later I shared with him his last cruise round the Mediterranean in his schooner yacht *The Foam*. An amusing little story may be told here illustrating Sir Edwin's consideration for even the humblest creatures. *The Foam* had left Sicily one day, three hours sail behind her, when a member of the crew brought on deck a box of live lizards he had captured on the island. On being asked how he was going to feed them he confessed that it had not occurred to him; they would have to starve. This would never do for the author of *The Light of Asia*. He insisted on the great ship being turned back again! Late that night the island was reached, the captives safely poured out on their native beach, and the cruise resumed with not even the life of a lizard on our consciousness."

His Courage Never Failed

"Though his eye-sight failed him at last," says Lester, "his courage never did, and he composed well and brilliantly, by dictation, right up to the end, which came, in London, on March 24, 1904. He had been confined to his bed for a week; and gradually lost strength, and on the morning of his release, said quietly to those about him, "I think I am dying!" and at noon a very gracious and gifted spirit went

into the outer light. He had often expressed a wish to be cremated; to me it fell to light the funeral pyre and watch the reduction to ashes of one who had endeared himself to all who knew him; whose courage and industry were as inexhaustible as was his belief in the dignity and hopefulness of life in whatever form it existed.”

His Power of Concentration

Of his powers of concentration, his eldest son Lester says in an account he wrote to the Madras Mail in 1931 of his father: “With ceaseless activity of mind and body, and extraordinary powers of concentration born of long practise, my father could write anywhere and anyhow. He once said to me that he thought he could write ‘inside a boiler while it is being riveted’, and though he probably never underwent this ordeal, I have seen him produce, without preparation and in circumstances which would have incapacitated most men, work which still gives delight wherever English is read or spoken. This great gift of detachment, of complete mastery over his mind alone enabled him to accomplish in the intervals of exacting daily work many volumes of verse and prose, culminating in *The Light of Asia*, the great Buddhist epic which made Sir Edwin one of the most popular exponents of Eastern thought of his time. This book

was mostly written at Hamlet House, near Southend in Essex, a pleasant little weekend bungalow overlooking the Thames with the Kentish hills in the distance. There, after laborious days in town and in any intervals of leisure which occurred, was written a work of which countless editions and translations have appeared in every part of the world, a work not less popular today than when it first appeared nearly fifty years ago.”

Further proof of Arnold’s powers of concentration, of which his son speaks, has been given by Dr Brooks Wright in his book: *Edwin Arnold Interpreter of Buddhism to the West* (Bookman Associates Inc., New York, 1957) in the following terms:

“Arnold set about writing *The Light of Asia* quite deliberately as a witness for religious liberalism. It was composed during busy months when England was in an uproar over the Eastern Question and when *The Daily Telegraph* was hotly fulminating against the Russians abroad and Gladstone in England. He did not have much spare time and turned to poetry for relaxation in the few moments which he could snatch from his work. Much of it was written in Hamlet House, Southend, overlooking the mouth of the Thames. Other pages were composed at odd moments, while travelling to work by train, or jotted down on envelopes, margins of newspapers, the back of menus and even upon his shirt cuffs. Fortunately he had a mind impervious to most

distractions. If no pen were ready, a pencil would do and if that were not to be had, a piece of firewood could be whittled into shape."Girdle Round the World

Now, let me supplement from an authoritative source the son's story about his father. "Arnold has been everywhere, learned all languages, read everything and written about everything, sometimes as mere journalist, sometimes as critical thinker, sometimes as poet," states The Cabinet Portrait Gallery, 1893. "In the forty years of his literary activity he had put a girdle round the world of language, of science and of religious thought. As to other writers of the same class, we look to him less for depth than for breadth, less for original research than for brilliance of exposition and no one coming to him with this expectation will be greatly disappointed."

Arnold's contribution to knowledge and research brought him high honours from royalty and learned societies. Queen Victoria, who readily gave him audiences, conferred on him the K.C.S.I. in 1877, the Shah of Persia made him a Commander of the Lion and the Sun, the Sultan of Turkey bestowed on him the Order of the Medjidiech and Asmanila, and the Mikado of Japan honoured him with high distinctions and treated him exceptionally well when he visited that country.

The King of Siam (present-day Thailand) recognised Arnold's services to Buddhism by conferring on him the

Order of the White Elephant in 1879. The royal letter which accompanied the award states that Arnold's interpretation of Buddhism was not strictly orthodox, but expressed His Majesty's gratitude for writing *The Light of Asia* "in the most widespread language in the world."

The chair on which Arnold sat while he composed most of *The Light of Asia* is preserved in the London Buddhist Society.

The Buddha-Gaya Question

The Light of Asia achieved the zenith of popularity between 1884 and 1885, and Buddhists all over the world hailed Arnold as a great champion of their religion. From India, Ceylon, Burma and Siam invitations began to pour on him to visit the East. For a long time he had longed to see Buddha-Gaya and other places sacred to Buddhists, for during his four years' stay in India from 1857 as Principal of Deccan College, Poona, he had not visited them.

Arnold had a particular fascination for Benares, for it was there at the Deer Park in Isipatana that the Buddha preached his first sermon—the Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta or Turning of the Wheel of Law—after attaining Buddhahood. Seated by the stupa in Sarnath amid the ruins

of shrines and memorials of Asokan times, Arnold pensively mused: “A more consecrated ground than this could hardly be found anywhere else.” But Buddha-Gaya with its ancient Bodhitree—or rather an offshoot of the original Tree of Enlightenment that gave shelter to Bodhisatta Gautama when he was striving for Buddhahood—is the holiest shrine of the Buddhists. Arnold approached the sacred spot with real reverence. Until the 13th century it was in the exclusive control of the Buddhists. But at the time of Arnold’s visit it was the property of a Saivite priest, the Mahant. Arnold was grieved to find the place desecrated by Saivite Hindus (*vide* Appendix 1 for a graphic account headed *East and West: A Splendid Opportunity* by Arnold himself in *The Daily Telegraph*, 1893.) “Pluck as many as you like, sahib; it is nought to us,” said the Hindu priest when Arnold asked if he might pick a few leaves from the Bodhitree. Arnold silently took three or four leaves which he pulled from the bough over his head.

Rousing Receptions in Ceylon

From India, Arnold crossed over to Ceylon, carrying the Bodhi-leaves with him. His first visit was to Panadura, then as now a stronghold of Buddhism. There at the historic Rankoth Vihara, that erudite scholar Weligama Sri

Sumangala Maha Nayaka Thera and a thousand yellowrobed brethren of the Order together with men, women and children in their thousands accorded him a rousing reception. Distinguished citizens of Panadura held dinners and garden-parties in his honour. At one of these parties he was served with a Sinhala sweetmeat called "Asmi." The intricacy with which this half-moon shaped oil cake was made intrigued Arnold. His host explained how it was made to his amusement.

An address of welcome was presented hailing Arnold as "a scholar who had eclipsed the fame of other learned men as a mountain of diamonds would the lustre of mountains of other precious stones." For two long hours Arnold interviewed the Maha Nayaka Thera, Sri Sumangala. In the course of this interview Arnold described the shocking state of affairs at Buddha-Gaya and suggested the restoration of the temple by amicable settlement with the Mahant and the favour of the Indian Government. He also urged that a request be made to place the temple in the hands of a representative committee of Buddhist nations (*vide* Appendix 1 for further details).

Idea Takes Root and Spreads

"I think there never was an idea which took root and spread

so far and fast as that thrown out thus in the sunny temple-court at Panadura, amid the waving taliputs," says Arnold. "Like those tropical plants which can almost be seen to grow, the suggestion quickly became an universal aspiration, first in Ceylon and next in other Buddhist countries." The monks and the laity alike begged Arnold to lay his suggestion before the appropriate governmental authorities. He at once acceded to their request, taking up the matter with the Governor of Ceylon, the Governor of Madras, the Secretary of State for India, and the Viceroy himself (*vide* Appendix 1 for further details).

From Panadura, Arnold returned to Colombo, where at Vidyodaya Pirivena, a leading seat of Oriental learning, he was accorded an enthusiastic reception, prominent monks and laity in large numbers taking part in it. An address of welcome was presented to Arnold, expressing gratitude to him for "shedding a moonlight lustre over the Dhamma." Among the notabilities present was Col. H. S. Olcott, one of the earliest Americans to embrace Buddhism.

A Casket of Gold

Arnold's last halt in Ceylon was Kandy, the hill capital of Ceylon, where the four last kings of the Sinhalas held sway. The leading Buddhists there and the Buddhist prelates of

the Dalada Maligawa, the Temple of the Tooth, received him with great honour. He presented them with a Bodhi-leaf he had brought from Buddha-Gaya which was received with “eager and passionate emotion.” The leaf was placed in a casket of gold and made the center of a weekly puja. In return, the monks gifted him with a begging bowl and a yellow robe.

As already stated in the opening paragraph, H. Dharmapala, who adopted the life of a Brahmachari (a celibate) and an Anagarika (a homeless one) and lastly entered the Order of Monks, visited Buddha-Gaya and there conceived the idea of a great missionary movement that would revive Buddhism in the land of its birth and restore the Buddhist sacred places to their rightful owners. Thanks largely to Arnold’s propaganda for the cause, the idea caught at once, Arnold continuing active as one of the English representatives (*vide* Appendix 1 for further details).

Aroused Japanese Interest

During his first visit to Japan in 1889, Arnold addressed a meeting of Japanese Buddhists, arousing their interest in the sacred places of Buddhism in India, and a society was formed to promote interest in Buddha-Gaya. On his second visit in 1892, he gave a similar address in which he declared

that he would gladly sacrifice his life, if need be, in so great a cause. His pleading was so convincing that the society set about making plans to purchase land at Buddha-Gaya and to send a number of Japanese Buddhist monks to Gaya. In 1893 Arnold wrote a powerful article headed *East and West: A Splendid Opportunity* in *The Daily Telegraph* making out a strong case for the restoration of Buddha-Gaya for Buddhists (*vide* Appendix 1). The article received further publicity by being reprinted in *East and West* and in the journal of the Mahabodhi Society.

Further Trouble in 1895

In 1895 the Mahant agreed to the installation of a seven-centuries old Buddha statue presented to Dharmapāla by the Japanese in the Buddha-Gaya temple, but at the last moment refused to allow it. Dharmapala took the matter up before the District Magistrate who decided in favour of the Buddhists. But the High Court of Calcutta reversed the order in an action which, it is said, cost the Mahant a million rupees!

Arnold wrote a friendly letter to the Mahant in Hindi, and sent it together with a copy of his translation of the Gīta as a proof of his goodwill towards Hinduism. But nothing came of it. Dharmapāla installed his statue in the Buddhist

resthouse near by. Trouble broke out again in 1895 when Dharmapāla tried to secure title to the village near the temple. The Mahant was alarmed and persuaded the Government to order Dharmapāla to remove the statue from the resthouse. This order was, however, withdrawn later. The dispute between Dharmapāla and the Mahant dragged on for a decade or more, and in 1900 Dharmapāla appealed to Arnold for further assistance. He was, however, too sick at the time. He died in 1904 almost half a century before the final settlement of the Buddha-Gaya question in 1953.

But for Arnold's original idea, Buddha-Gaya might still be in the control of non-Buddhists. His achievement in popularising Buddhism in the West at a time when the use of the word religion in the plural was taboo was truly remarkable. Equally admirable was the dexterity with which he roused the Buddhist world to a realisation of their just rights. For these, we, Buddhists, owe him an irrepayable debt of gratitude.

Buddhism and Science

“Buddhism, justly understood, touches the hand of modern science; and, if your patience permits, I will be bold enough to read from *The Light of Asia* a few verses which exactly

express my view," stated Arnold in the course of an address in Japan.

Before beginning 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.

It spreadeth 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.

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.

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.

“I have often said,” continued Arnold, “and shall say again and again, that between Buddhism and modern science there exists a close intellectual bond. When Tyndall tells us of sounds we cannot hear; and Norman Lockyer of colours we cannot see; when Sir William Thomson and Professor Sylvester push mathematical investigation to regions almost beyond the Calculus, and others, still bolder, imagine and try to grapple with, though they cannot actually grasp, a space of four dimensions, what is all this except the Buddhist Maya, a practical recognition of the illusions of the senses? And when Darwin shows us life passing onward and upward through a series of constantly improving forms towards the Better and the Best, each individual starting in new existence with the records of bygone good and evil stamped deep and ineffaceably from the old ones, what is this again but the Buddhist doctrine of Dharma and of Karma. And when the Victorian poet and preacher and moralist rightly discern and worthily teach, as the last and truest wisdom, that Justice, Duty, and Right control events, and that the eternal Equity and Compassion of the universe overlooks and forgives no wrong and no disobedience, but

also neglects and forgets no good deed or word or thought, what is this except the teaching of the Buddha? Finally, if we gather up all the results of modern research, and look away from the best literature to the largest discovery in physics and the latest word in biology, what is the conclusion—the high and joyous conclusion—forced upon the mind, except that which renders true Buddhism so glad and hopeful? Surely it is that the Descent of man from low beginnings implies his Ascent to supreme and glorious developments; that 'the Conservation of Matter and of Energy,' a fact absolutely demonstrated, points to the kindred fact of the conservation and continuity of all Life, whereof matter is but the apparent vehicle and expression; that death is probably nothing but a passage and a promotion; that the destiny of man has been, and must be, and will be worked out by himself under the eternal and benign laws which never vary and never mislead, and that for every living creature the path thus lies open, by compliance, by effort, by insight, by aspiration, by goodwill, by right action, and by loving service, to that which Buddhists term Nirvana, and we Christians 'the peace of God that passeth all understanding' " (*Seas and Lands* pages 285, 286, 289 and 290).

Arnold's Sources

Pali, the language of Theravada Buddhism, is not specified as one of the several Eastern languages that Arnold studied during his four-year stay in India, or subsequently in England. Presumably he did not have facilities in India for the study of Pali, for at that time Pali Buddhism was almost extinct in the sub-continent. Nor was Pali taught in regular classes in England at the time. For the use of the few self-taught students, Dr R. C. Childers brought out his Dictionary of the Pali Language in two volumes in 1872 and 1875 respectively. That was just a few years before the appearance of *The Light of Asia*. Amid his multifarious duties on *The Daily Telegraph* Arnold may not have had the time to benefit from this dictionary. But it may be presumed that he read the translation of the Khuddaka Patha by Childers published in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1870. Perhaps, Arnold had acquired a smattering of Pali.

Arnold says that his poem is based on 'considerable study.' Thus it is likely that he read almost all the then extant translations of both Theravada and Mahayana literature. Unfortunately, Professor T. W. Rhys Davids, the greatest and most accurate interpreter of Theravada Buddhism, who, on his own admission, "shaped" his "life according to the Noble Eightfold Path," had begun his stupendous work on Theravada just a year before the publication of *The Light of Asia*. His earliest work *A Manual of Buddhism* was published in 1878 by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in its non-Christian Religion Series. "This book, founded on all Pali material then available concerning the *Life and*

Teachings of the Buddha, contains also short sketches of the history of the Order and of the Tripitaka," says Miss I. B. Horner, President, Pali Text Society, London, in a biography of Rhys Davids in the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism, Ceylon. "Though only the modicum of canonical texts was accessible to him, the writer's extraordinarily clear insight is shown here time and time again as it was to be later, often as 'lamps' in the dark, in his writings and footnotes. His intellect took him straight to the heart of a matter, having seen so far, nothing but the best on that subject was possible." Had Arnold read this book before he composed *The Light of Asia*? Had he done so, he might have avoided the mistakes in it.

"As One Watches An Enemy"

Dr. Edward Conze, one of the greatest living Buddhist scholars, in his book *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (Bruno, Cassirer, Oxford, 1951) describes early 19th century Western scholars of Buddhism in picturesque phraseology. Many, of them, he says, "studied Buddhism as one watches an enemy, intent on proving the superiority of Christianity." To this category falls the Rev. Spence Hardy, for twenty years a Wesleyan missionary in Ceylon, described as Arnold's main source by several writers. Another that fell in

this category was Sir Monier Williams, Boden Professor of Sanskrit, Oxford, whose works, among others, according to Dr. Brooks Wright, the author of *Interpreter of Buddhism to the West* (Bookman Associates Inc. New York, 1957), “paved the way” for *The Light of Asia*. A third was Professor Jules Barthelemy St. Hilaire, the French author and journalist. These three were no doubt outstanding orientalist of their day, but some of the statements they made in their books on the Buddha and Buddhism were so outrageous that they provoked Dr. Paul Carus, the doughty champion of Buddhism in America, a German by birth, to write in defence his famous book *Buddhism and Its Christian Critics* (Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago, 1894), in which he successfully met their arguments in trenchant language. “For myself,” wrote Paul Carus, “I must confess that I never felt like a true Buddhist before a perusal of Professor Williams’ description of Buddhism; for I am now more firmly convinced than ever before that our Church—Christianity can only become a scientifically true and logically sound religion of cosmic and universal significance by being transformed into that Buddhism which Professor Williams refuses to regard as a religion in the proper sense of the word.”

“Did you never read in the Scriptures,” asks Paul Carus, “that the stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner?”

Paul Carus also made devastating attacks on others like Charles Gutzlaff, G. Voigt and Adolph Thomas for making

derogatory references to the Buddha and Buddhism.

Now, it may pertinently be asked how these offensive books could have “paved the way” for the delightful poem *The Light of Asia* in which Arnold held the Buddha and Buddhism in the highest veneration! It may be argued that a good vehicle cannot run swiftly along a rugged road, but cannot the vehicle fly over it? The very cussedness of the books referred to made *The Light of Asia* fly triumphantly over the prejudices accumulated in the West in the Victorian era for several years against Buddhism. Thus Dr. Wright’s assumption that the books referred to “paved the way” for *The Light of Asia* is correct.

Hardy’s “Imperfect Citations”

The Listener of June 14, 1956 carried a broadcast talk on Edwin Arnold by Francis Watson in which he described Spence Hardy as an ‘honest missionary’ whose ‘remarkable book’ *A Manual of Buddhism in its Modern Development* (London, 1853), he said, was “certainly Arnold’s main source”. But Arnold says in the preface to his poem that he has “taken the imperfect citations much as they stand in Spence Hardy’s work.” The ‘honest’ missionary’s ‘remarkable book’ contains ‘imperfect citations’! Arnold has not accepted Hardy’s views at all, and proceeds to say that

his views on Nirvana, Dharma, Karma and other 'chief features' of Buddhism are the 'fruits' of his own 'considerable study.'

Watson apparently finds fault with Arnold for rejecting Hardy's views, and ridicules that in *The Light of Asia* Nirvana 'becomes nameless quiet,' 'nameless joy,' 'sinless, stirless rest,' 'the change which never changes.' It is the best possible definition of Nirvana. Nirvana is a supramundane state which even a Buddha cannot explain in mundane language to be understood by a worldling. Nirvana is "beyond the realm of logical thought (Atakkavacara)," says the Buddha. Only the one who attains Nirvana knows what it is. As Rhys Davids says, Nirvana "does not mean annihilation in the sense so often assigned to it, but signifies a moral and mental condition to be reached in this world and in this life, and is, in fact, a changed state of mind" (Hibbert Lectures, 1881, Appendix x).

Max Muller's Refutation

Professor Max Muller, himself a Christian, refutes St Hilaire's view that Buddhism is nihilism. Says Max Muller: "We cannot bring ourselves to believe that the reformer of India, the teacher of so perfect a code of morality, the young prince who gave up all he had in order to help those whom

he saw afflicted in mind, body, or estate, should have cared about speculations which he knew would either be misunderstood, or not understood at all, by those whom he wished to benefit; that he should have thrown away one of the most powerful weapons in the hands of every religious teacher, the belief in a future life, and should not have seen that, if this life was sooner or later to end in nothing, it was hardly worth the trouble which he took himself, or the sacrifices which he imposed on his disciples." Quoting extensively from the Dhammapada and other Theravada sources, Max Muller asks: "What does it mean when the Buddha calls earnestness the path of immortality, and thoughtlessness the path of death? Buddhaghosa, a learned man of the fifth century, here explains immortality by Nirvana, and that this was also the Buddha's thought is clearly established by a passage following immediately after: 'These wise people, meditative, steady, always possessed of strong powers, attain to Nirvana, the highest happiness.' Can this be annihilation? And would such expressions have been used by the founder of this new religion, if what he called immortality had, in his own idea, been annihilation?"

"Nirvana occurs even in the purely moral sense of quietness and absence of passion. 'When a man bears everything without uttering a sound,' says the Buddha, 'he has attained Nirvana.' Quiet long-suffering he calls the highest Nirvana; he who has conquered passion and hatred is said to enter into Nirvana.

“In other passages, Nirvana is described as the result of just knowledge. Thus we read: ‘Hunger or desire is the worst of diseases, the body the greatest of pains; if one knows this truly, that is Nirvana, the highest happiness.’ The Buddha says: ‘The sages who injure nobody, and who always control their body, they will go to the unchangeable place (Nirvana), where, if they have gone, they will suffer no more.’

“Nirvana is called the quiet place, the immortal place, even simply that which is immortal: and the expression occurs, that the wise dive into this immortal. As, according to the Buddha, everything that was made, everything that was put together, passes away again, and resolves itself into its component parts, he calls in contra-distinction that which is not made, i.e., the uncreated and eternal, Nirvana. He says: ‘When you have understood the destruction of all that was made, you will understand that which was not made.’ Whence it appears that even for him a certain something exists, which is not made, which is eternal and imperishable.

“On considering such sayings, to which many more might be added, one recognises in them a conception of Nirvana altogether irreconcilable with nihilism. The question in such matters is not a more or less, but an out-out. If these sayings have maintained themselves, in spite of their contradiction to orthodox metaphysics, the only explanation, in my opinion, is that they were firmly fixed in the tradition which went back to the Buddha and his disciples” (*Selected Essays*,

Vol. 2, London, 1881).

Max Muller also made a striking statement by way of an answer to Christian missionaries who feared the existence of similarities in Buddhism and Christianity. “If I do find,” he wrote, “in certain Buddhist works doctrines identically the same as in Christianity, far from being frightened, I feel delighted, for surely truth is not the less true because it is believed by the majority of the human race” (Selected Essays, London, 1881). Arnold himself was of this view.

The Chinese Dhammapada

Arnold admits in the preface to his poem that he took ‘imperfect Buddhist citations’ from Hardy’s book, and does not name any other source. But Brooks Wright in, his book *Interpreter of Buddhism to the West* specifically says that Arnold’s ‘most important’ source was Samuel Beal’s translation of the Abhinishkramana Sūtra. Beal, who was Professor of Chinese in the London University, was essentially a translator of Chinese Buddhist texts. The Romantic Legends of Sakya Buddha which he brought out in 1875 is said to be a translation of the Abhinishkramana Sutra, a sixth century Buddhist text translated from Sanskrit into Chinese. A book with the same title was found in Tibetan. The Chinese title given to it by him means “The

Life of the Buddha and his disciples," but the Chinese translator gives other names to it by which it was known to other schools.

It was Beal who discovered the Chinese version of the Dhammapada among a large collection of Chinese Buddhist texts presented by the Japanese government in 1870s to the India Office in London. He found four different Chinese versions of the Dhammapada there. Of these four, he translated into English the first one entitled *Fa-Kheu-King*, which approached most nearly to the Pali Dhammapada. The author of this version was Shaman Wei-Chilan who lived during the Wu dynasty in the third century of the Christian era. The *Fa-Kheu-King* contains 39 chapters as against the 26 in the Pali Dhammapada, and 700 stanzas as against the 423 in the Pali version. Beal thinks that the original manuscript which was brought to China from Ceylon by Fa-hien was the same as that known in Ceylon, the differences which occur between the two being attributable to special reasons existing at the time of the translations.

Buddhaghosa's commentary to the Pali Dhammapada contains stories about the origin of the single verses there. The Chinese Dhammapada gives a tale for each of the stanzas in it.

The voracious reader that he was, Arnold might have read them and used them as some of his sources.

A Factual Error

In his book on Arnold, Dr. Brooks Wright says that Max Muller's translation of the Dhammapada was Arnold's "third source," which, he states, appeared in 1870. But in the first edition of Max Muller's translation of the Dhammapada came out in 1881 in the Sacred Books of the East Series (Oxford). Since *The Light of Asia* was first published in 1879, Max Muller's translation of the Dhammapada, first published in 1881, could not have been one of Arnold's sources.

When I pointed out this mistake to Dr. Wright, he promptly wrote back to say that "mistakes exist only to be corrected, and, of course, should be." He thanked me for calling his attention to the mistake.

Spence Hardy's *Buddhism in its Modern Development* and Samuel Beal's translation of the Abhiniskramana Sutra are, according to Wright, the books from which Arnold "learned what he knew of the Buddhist scriptures." Wright thinks that Arnold possibly read other works like the translations of the Lalitavistara and Saddharma Pundarika.

But the present author, who does not claim to be a scholar, believes that Arnold's 'considerable study' of Buddhism includes the study of a biography of the Buddha by the Russian scholar Issak Jacob Schmidt of St. Petersburg, published in the Asiatic Journal of 1825, the first biography

of the Buddha published in the West; B. H. Hodgson's contributions on his investigations into Buddhism in Nepal published in the *Asiatic Researches*, Calcutta, and the journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, London (1825–40); the analysis of the *Kanjur*, the Tibetan Buddhist text, by Alexander Csoma de Koros, published in the *Asiatic Researches*, Calcutta, in 1836; Eugene Bumouf's *Essay sur le Pali* (1826) and *History of Buddhism* (1846); George Turnour's translation of the *Mahāvamsa* (1837); Viggo Fausboll's edition and Latin translation of the Dhammapada, the first Pali text to be published in the West (1855); A. Weber's German translation of the Dhammapada: (1860); Arthur Schopenhauer's—references to Buddhism in his *World as Will and Representation* (1819); Franz Anton von Schiefner's translation of Taranatha's *History of Buddhism* (1869); and A. Weber's translation of Asvaghosa's *Vajrasuci* (1859).

Poet Laureateship

With the death of Lord Tennyson in October, 1892, the poet laureateship of England fell vacant. Arnold published in *The Daily Telegraph* on the day of the death itself a lengthy tribute to Tennyson in verse. Who was to succeed Tennyson? This was the topic of conversation in London literary circles. The merits and demerits of various English

poets were discussed freely. The names of Lewis Morris, Alfred Austin and Edwin Arnold were mentioned, and ultimately the consensus of opinion was that the author of *The Light of Asia* was the most deserving poet to be Tennyson's successor. Arnold himself thought so.

Queen Victoria favoured him for the laureateship, but her Prime Minister, Gladstone, was opposed to him because he was not a fundamentalist. It is said that there were frequent exchanges of words between the Queen and her Prime Minister over Arnold. Then both sides "avoided the question of an appointment to the laureateship until Gladstone resigned in March, 1894. Lord Rosebury succeeded Gladstone, and Arnold's chances appeared to improve. With his mind not yet made up about an appointment to the laureateship, Rosebury passed out of office. His successor, the Marquis of Salisbury, appointed Alfred Austin to the laureateship mainly in recognition of his services to Tory journalism. Immediately Arnold sent a telegram to Austin in the following terms:

"Accept my heartiest congratulations with which no grudge mingles, although I myself expected the appointment. I rejoice at the continuance of this appointment, which will be worthily and patriotically borne by you."

Alfred Austin embodied this telegram in his autobiography, commenting that he "would rather be the man who could send such a telegram, in such circumstances, than be incapable of sending, yet have written the greatest of

poems.”

Benevolent Imperialist

Like most Victorians of his class, Arnold was a frank imperialist, but not a jingo. He believed that British rule was for the best interests of India. “It is certain,” he wrote in his final report on Deccan College, Poona, “that we shall not always retain India, and, equally, certain that our business is to deal with her as honest tenants, who will render back their house in fair order to the great Landlord.” These words were written just after the Mutiny, when most Englishmen thought that they had crushed Indian resistance for ever. He believed that England’s business was to educate Indians in English science and technology to take their place in the comity of nations.

Lord Dalhousie’s policy of annexation of Berar found in Arnold an uncompromising critic. He described it as usury on the part of “Shylocks of Calcutta, with no Portia to reprove the transgressions of the bond” (*The Marquis of Dalhousie’s Administration of British India* by Edwin Arnold, 1862). He also expressed his indignation at the sale of the private property of the Maharajah’s widow for a nominal amount.

Although he has not expressed himself in such strong terms as his contemporary Max Muller, who, in his address to candidates preparing for the L.C.S. entitled "India—what can it teach us?", sought to remove the prejudices against India which he described as "a morass of moral degradation and an ants' nest of life." Arnold, the imperialist that he was, never contended that the political inferiority of Indians meant their cultural or spiritual inferiority. In fact, he won his most lasting laurels as a great defender of Indian religions.

Arnold's Interest in Science

Arnold evinced keen interest in science. Many of the leading scientists of the day were his friends with whom he carried on long correspondence on scientific matters. One of them Thomas Huxley, the most outstanding scientist of his time, was, like Arnold, a keen student of Buddhism.

It is of interest to recall what Huxley had to say about the Buddha and his teachings in his famous Romanes Lecture of 1893. "Buddhism is a religion which knows no God in the Western sense, which denies a soul to man and counts the belief in immortality a blunder, which refuses any efficacy to prayer and sacrifice, which bids men to look to nothing but their own efforts to salvation, which in its original

purity knew nothing of the vows of obedience and never sought the aid of the secular arm, yet spread over a considerable portion of the world with marvellous rapidity, and is still the dominant creed of a large fraction of mankind...it is a remarkable indication of the subtlety of Indian speculation that Gotama should have seen deeper than the greatest of modern Idealists.”

Among Arnold’s other scientific friends were Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, John Stewart Mill, James Geikie, John Ball, William Crookes, and Sir John Lubbock. He followed with keen interest Lubbock’s experiments with ants. He also joined one day with Crookes in testing a radiometer. His knowledge of science was much more than that of the average layman.

Arnold was also interested in spiritualism, and was a member of the Society for Psychical Research which included among its members Lord Tennyson, Andrew Lang, William James, A. J. Balfour and Sir William Crookes. He began to attend séances after the death of his wife Fanny. He wrote down her name, it is said, in Persian on a slip of paper and tightly folded it. The medium replied that she could not read it as it was not in English, but that she could hear it, and that the name sounded like Fanny.

Visit to America

President Charles William Eliot of the Harvard University, who included half of Henry Clarke Warren's outstanding work, *Buddhism in Translations* (Harvard Oriental Series) (1896), in the Harvard Classics, half a million copies of which were sold, invited Arnold to visit America and to lecture at Harvard. He readily accepted the invitation, and set out on August 22, 1889. Washington impressed him as "a very agreeable and handsome city" with "green and umbrageous beauty hardly seen elsewhere." He visited the White House, where President Harrison, "a courteous, kindly, shrewd and business-stamped gentleman" received him cordially. The conversation provided him copy for several columns in *The Daily Telegraph*.

He was the guest of George W. Child, owner of the Public Ledger at Philadelphia, where he called on the great American poet Walt Whitman, then an old man. He read out to Whitman a few pages from *The Light of Asia*.

At the end of September, he was the guest of President Eliot, and met Oliver Wendell Holmes, Whittier, Mrs. Emerson and Alice Longfellow. In October he gave two lectures in Sanders Theatre at Harvard, one on the Upanishads and the other on the Mahabharata.

Japanese Buddhism

From America Arnold crossed over to Japan, where he spent a few days as guest of Mr Frazer, the British Minister in Tokyo. He desired to live in native style and see the country at close range. Accordingly he rented out a house well beyond the European quarter, and lived there with his daughter Catherine, adopting the Oriental style of living. He was anxious to settle down for an indefinite period, but his daughter, a young unmarried woman, wanted to be back in England, where there were eligible bachelors.

Arnold at first thought that Japanese Buddhism was 'degenerate and decorative,' and considered Mahayana as a corruption of Theravada. Later he changed his view and attributed Japanese 'courtesy and self-respect' to the influence of Mahayana.

With his daughter, Arnold left Tokyo for London in January 1891, and reached home in February.

Back Again in America

Before the year ended, however, Arnold was back in America on a lecture tour arranged by James Burton Pond. At the Academy of Music at Philadelphia, he gave his first lecture which fascinated a large audience for two and a half hours. The gross receipts were \$ 1,317. The tour took him to

New York, then to Boston and Cambridge, and back again to Philadelphia. Originally he had agreed to give fifty lectures, but so great was the demand that he had to increase the number to a hundred for \$ 20,000, then a considerable amount. However, ill-health prevented him from continuing his tour, and he spent a few days with his friend Andrew Carnegie, the multi-millionaire, before he set out once more for Japan.

Like Home-Coming

Since he was well known as a friend of all things Japanese, his return to Japan was like a home-coming. As on the first occasion, so again, on being invited to do so, he addressed a Japanese audience on the Buddha-Gaya question.

The most significant episode of his second visit to Japan was his marriage to a pretty Japanese girl of twenty, Tama Kurokawa. His family in England received this news with no little surprise. He took her to London where she soon won the love and respect of her husband's children.

Arnold was so touched by her willingness to care for an old man that he wrote:

"I am still inclined to believe that the average or abstract Japanese female comes, all things considered, nearest

among her sex, as regards natural gifts, to what we understand by an angelic disposition...She is, in point of fact, the most self-denying, the most dutiful and the most patient woman in the world, as well as the most considerate and pleasing; and, as I truly believe, more faithful to her ... ideal of rectitude than any other of her sisters among the nations."

Was Arnold a Buddhist?

The answer to this question seems to be unequivocally in (a) the title of his poem *The Light of Asia*, and the title of his later poem, *The Light of the World*, and (b) two passages in his preface to *The Light of Asia*, where he states "...and most beneficent, with one exception (Jesus Christ), in the history of Thought", and his quotation of St. Hilaire, who says of the Buddha: "His constant heroism equalled his conviction; and although the doctrine that he propounded is false, the personal examples that he gave are irreproachable."

"Whatever may have been Arnold's personal convictions," writes Mr. Francis Story to the author, "he was, careful to avoid making a public avowal of them, and even seemed to fear giving suspicion of them. He could not have hoped for the poet laureateship otherwise. And while non-Christians by birth have received knighthoods, the Establishment

would have looked with acute disfavour upon a Christian-born English knight who changed his religion.”

“Personally, I have no doubt that Arnold was a Buddhist at heart,” says Mr. Story, “but many people in the West still feel that being a Buddhist does not exact any public avowal. It is not like Christianity in which not to declare one’s faith openly is reckoned an offence meriting punishment hereafter. And in Arnold’s time, more than now, an open declaration that he was a Buddhist on the part of a prominent and titled man would have caused something of a scandal.” Now the question arises: why didn’t Arnold declare himself a Buddhist once his hope of laureateship was shattered? He had an interval of ten years before his death to do so if he so desired.

In his biography of Arnold, Dr. Brooks Wright says that in *The Light of the World*, Arnold gives “the completest exposition of his religious views.”

As against this, however, we have it recorded in Henry Stanley’s diary that Arnold’s “soul was not in his song, though there are beautiful passages in it, but it is the tone of an unbeliever.” Stanley, it must be remembered, was the man who persuaded Arnold to write *The Light of the World* (see below). Isn’t Arnold’s espousal of the Buddha-Gaya question a strong pointer to his acceptance of the Buddha’s teaching? He declared in Japan that he was prepared to lay down his life, if need be, for so worthy a cause.

It is on record that after his Buddhist studies, Arnold

abandoned the shooting of animals and birds, a pastime in which he revelled earlier in life. Isn't it an index to his observance of the first of the five precepts of Buddhism?

The story recorded elsewhere in this booklet about Arnold's concern for the lives of lizards reveals that he was a firm believer in ahimsa—essentially a Buddhist virtue.

The fact that he was vice-president of a vegetarian society in Bayswater of which a young Indian student then M. K. Gandhi, later Mahatma Gandhi, was secretary, is further proof that Arnold was an ahimsa-vādin or believer in non-violence.

In a letter to a local newspaper in 1956, criticising a biography of Arnold in *The Listener*, Mr. Wilmot P. Wijetunga of Matara claimed that Arnold's "acceptance of an honorary membership of the International Buddhist Society was in itself a sufficient profession of his faith (if formal profession were needed) at a time when in England the use of the word religion in the plural was shocking, and that Arnold, to all intents and purposes, was a Buddhist." But it is an untenable claim, for membership—not merely honorary—of many religious societies like the Y.M.C.A.'s and the Mahabodhi Society is open to those of faiths other than Christianity and Buddhism.

If Arnold was a Buddhist, he was a Buddhist who believed in a transmigrating soul, which is contrary to the accepted Theravada teaching. In the ending of his poem *The Light of Asia*, he says: "The Dewdrop slips into the shining sea!" The

dewdrop here means the soul which is not authentic Pali Buddhism.

Arnold reminds me of another great European, Professor Dines Andersen, the eminent Danish Pali scholar, who once declared that he “felt both like a Christian and a Buddhist.” In the words of Professor Poul Tuxen of Denmark, Andersen “understood the spirit and civilization which found expression in his cherished Pali texts, and he could not in the course of years escape the influence of ideas expressed in these texts. He entertained sincere feelings for the religious values in the old texts.”

Similarly, Arnold, though he was no Pali scholar, must have been influenced by the religious values of the Buddha’s teachings, translations of which he had read in English and other Western languages.

Buddhists of Ceylon and other Buddhist lands count Arnold as a co-religionist.

Why he wrote it?

If one believes that Arnold wrote *The Light of the World* primarily to placate the feelings of Christians which had been hurt by his earlier poem *The Light of Asia*, one is justified in one’s belief, for many Christians thought the

latter poem subversive of Christianity. The phenomenal success of *The Light of Asia* led others in the West to imagine that Arnold was at heart a believer in Buddhism, which he presented so brilliantly to the English-speaking world. He was quite aware of the lacerated feelings of Christians, but was undisturbed.

Persuasion came to him to compose *The Light of the World* from a friend of his, Henry Stanley, whose expedition to Central Africa to complete the discoveries of Livingstone was planned and financed by *The Daily Telegraph* under the direction of its editor, Edwin Arnold. On his return home in 1878, the first man on whom Stanley called was Arnold who was then giving the finishing touches to *The Light of Asia*. Stanley read the manuscript and was highly impressed, and he said to Arnold: "Now if you would take the Christ as the central figure of such a poem, and lavish upon it the same wealth of language, you would command an audience as large as the civilised world." But Arnold was not ready at once to undertake the task. Twelve years after the publication of *The Light of Asia*, however, he brought out *The Light of the World*.

"Tone of an Unbeliever"

The new poem failed to evoke the widespread enthusiasm

that greeted the earlier poem. Sir Denison Ross declared in his introduction to the 1926 edition of *The Light of Asia* that *The Light of the World* fell flat." Henry Stanley was so sorely disappointed that he wrote in his diary: "My friend had not hit the right chord. His style is feeble and vapid. His soul is not in his song though there are beautiful passages in it, but it is the tone of an unbeliever. Alas for it!" Some criticised "its invertebrate theology; its meretricious style; its gaudy commonplaces and its twaddling sentimentalism." Others used epithets like "stilted" and "deficient in strength and dignity." Readers generally agreed with these charges. But Arnold remained silent. Pious Christians thought that Arnold who had angered them by his praise of the Buddha should not have annoyed them still more by writing *The Light of the World*. He wrote most of this poem in his spare time in Japan.

Conclusion

With the death of Edwin Arnold on March 24, 1904, at the age of seventy-three, the English-speaking world lost an outstanding poet, litterateur and journalist, and world Buddhism a real friend. His memory, as he hopes in the preface to *The Light of Asia*, will be cherished by Buddhists for generations to come. May He Attain Nibbana!

Appendix 1

East and West—a Splendid Opportunity

by

Sir Edwin Arnold, M.A., K.C.L.E., C.S.I.

I would today, in these columns (*The Daily Telegraph*), respectfully invite the vast and intelligent British public to forget, for a little while, home weather and home politics, and to accompany me, in fancy, to a sunny corner of their empire, where there centres a far more important question, for the future of religion and civilisation, than any relating to parish councils or parish pumps. I will, by their leave, tell them of beautiful scenes under warm skies; of a temple fairer and more stately, as well as more ancient, than almost any existing fame; and will also show them how the Indian Government of Her Majesty, supported by their own enlightened opinion, might, through an easy and blameless act of administrative sympathy, render four hundred

millions of Asiatics for ever the friends and grateful admirers of England.

We will spread the magic carpet of Kamar-az-zaman, told of in the "Arabian Nights" and pass at once upon it to Patna, the busy city beside the Ganges, some 350 miles by rail from Calcutta. The closing days of March are hot there, and the river glitters as if it were molten gold under the fiery sun. We will not stay accordingly to inspect the indigo factories; or to visit the wonderful Golah, where 140,000 tonnes of rice can be laid up; nor the government opium factory where enough of that most useful and benign drug is stored to put the whole world to sleep. We will take train from Bankipore for Gaya, only fiftyseven miles away, and having rested in that town for the night, we shall have ordered carriages to be ready at break of day to convey us four koss further—some seven or eight miles—into the hills hereabout just across the valley of the Ganges.

I said you should see beautiful scenery, and surely this is such. The road, broad and well made, runs between the Gaya Hills on the right and the bright slow-stealing stream of the ancient Nilajan on the left. The mountain flanks are covered with cactus, wild indigo, and korinda bushes, showing a little temple perched upon almost every peak; while down on the flat, and especially along the sandy levels bordering the river, green stretches of palmgroves are interspersed with sal and tamarind trees, the undergrowth being long tigergrass and the common but ever-lovely ground palmetto, *Chamoerops humilis*. The air, deliciously

cool before the sun rises, is full of birds abroad for food—crows, parakeets, mynas, the blue-winged rollers, the green and scarlet “hammersmiths” black and white kingfishers, bee birds, bronze and emerald, with graceful silvery egrets stalking among the cattle. Later on, when the sky grows warmer, you will see clouds of lovely butterflies among the flowers of the orchids and poisonous datura, with sun-birds and dragon-flies skimming along the blue and pink lotuses in the pools. The people whom we meet upon the road are dark-skinned patient peasants going with their products to Gaya and Bankpur, while those whom we shall overtake will be mainly pilgrims of the day wending their way to the immeasurably holy place towards which we also are bound. For, see! they also at the fifty mile quit the main track, and turning to the left by a less excellent but still carriageable road, which winds under the now welcome shade of the jak-trees and mangoes; are making for that most sacred spot of all hallowed places in Asia, towards which our own feet and thoughts are bound.

It is here! Beyond the little village of mud huts and the open space where dogs and children and cattle bask together in the dust, beyond the Mahunt’s College, and yonder great fig tree which has split with its roots that wall, twelve feet thick, built before England had ever been discovered, nestles an abrupt hollow in the surface, symmetrical and well-kept, and full of stone images, terraces, balustrades, and shrines. It is oblong—as big, perhaps, altogether as Russel Square, and surrounded on its edges by small houses

and buildings. From one extremity of the hallowed area rises with great beauty and majesty a temple of very special style and design. The plinth of the temple is square, with a projecting porch, and on the top of this soars to the sky a pyramidal tower of nine storeys, profusely embellished with niches, string courses, and mouldings, while from the truncated summit of this an upper pinnacle rears itself, of graceful form, topped by a gold finial, representing the amalaka fruit. A smaller pyramidal tower stands at each corner of the roof of the lower structure, and there is a broad walk round the base of the Great Tower. Over the richly worked porch which fronts the east a triangular aperture is pierced, whereby the morning glory of the sun may fall through upon the gilded image seated in the sanctuary within. That image, you will perceive, is—or was—of Buddha, and this temple is the holiest and most famous, as well as nearly the sole surviving shrine of all those eighty-four thousand fanes erected to the Great Teacher by King Asoka, two hundred and eighteen years after the Lord Buddha's Nirvana.

Yet more sacred even than the cool, dark sanctuary into which we look, to see the sunbeams kissing the mild countenance of the Golden Buddha inside; more intensely moving to the Buddhists who come hither, and richer with associations of unspeakable interest and honour than King Asoka's stately temple, or even those stone railings carved with mermaids, crocodiles, elephants, and lotus flowers, which the king himself commanded, and which still

surround the shrine, is yonder square platform of stone, about a yard high from the ground, out of which a tree is growing. That is the Mahabodhi tree—in the opinion of superstitious votaries the very original Bodhi tree, miraculously preserved—but more rationally that which replaces and represents the ever memorable shade under which the inspired Siddhartha sate at the moment when he attained Sambodhi, the supreme light of his gentle wisdom. It is a fig tree—of the *Ficus indica* species—with the well-known long glossy leaves. Its stem is covered with patches of gold leaf, and its boughs are hung with streamers of white and coloured cloth, while at its root—frequently watered by the pious with sandal oil and attar of roses—will probably be seen sitting a Brahman priest of the Saivite sect intoning mantras. You will hear him say, “Gaya! Gaya Sirsa, Bodhi Gaya,” for though he is praying on behalf of Maharatta pilgrims, and does not know or care for Buddha, yet ancient formulas cling to the spot and to his lips. And, beyond all doubt, this is the spot most dear and divine, and precious beyond every other place on earth, to all the four hundred million Buddhists in China, Japan, Mongolia, Assam, Cambodia, Siam, Burma, Arakan, Nepaul, Tibet and Ceylon. This is the authentic site, and this the successor-tree, by many unbrokenly cherished generations of that about which my “Light of Asia” says:

“Then he arose, made strong by the pure meat,
And bent his footsteps where a great Tree grew,
The Bodhi tree (thenceforward in all years

Never to fade, and ever to be kept
In homage of the world), beneath whose leaves
It was ordained the Truth should come to Buddha,
Which now the Master knew; wherefore he went
With measured pace, steadfast, majestic,
Unto the Tree of Wisdom.
Oh, ye worlds Rejoice!
Our Lord wended unto the Tree!"

There is no doubt, in fact, of the authenticity of the spot. The four most sacred places of Buddhism are Kapilavastu (now Bhula), where Prince Siddhartha was born; Isipatana, outside Benares, where he first preached; Kusinara where he died; and this site marked by the tree, whereat "in the full moon of Wesak" 2483 years ago he mentally elaborated the gentle and lofty faith with which he has civilised Asia. And of all those four, the Tree-Place here at Buddha-Gaya is the most dear and sacred to Asiatic Buddhists. Why, then, is it today in the hands of Brahman priests, who do not care about the temple, except for the credit of owning it, and for the fees which they draw? The facts are these. Until the thirteenth century—that is, for more than 1400 years—it was exclusively used and guarded by Buddhists, but fell into decay and neglect, like other Buddhist temples, on the expulsion of Buddhism from India. Three hundred years ago a wandering Sivite ascetic visited the spot, and settled down, drawing round him gradually the beginning of what is now the College of Priests established there. So strong

have they since become in ownership, that when the Bengal Government in 1880 was repairing the temple and its grounds, and begged for its embellishment from the Mahunt a portion of Asoka's stone railing which he had built into his own house, the old Brahman would not give it up, and Sir Ashley Eden could not, or did not, compel the restoration.

The Buddhist world had indeed, well-nigh forgotten this hallowed and most interesting center of their faith—the Mecca, the Jerusalem, of a million Oriental congregations. When I sojourned in Buddha-Gaya a few years ago, I was grieved to see Maharatta peasants performing “Shraddh” in such a place, and thousands of precious ancient relics of carved stone inscribed with Sanskrit lying in piles around. I asked the priest if I might have a leaf from the sacred tree.

“Pluck as many as ever you like, sahib”, was his reply, “it is nought to us.”

Ashamed of his indifference, I took silently the three or four dark shining leaves which he pulled from the bough over his head, and carried them with me to Ceylon, having written upon each the holy Sanskrit formula. There I found them prized by the Sinhalese Buddhists with eager and passionate emotion. The leaf presented by me to the temple at Kandy, for example, was placed in a casket of precious metal and made the center of a weekly service, and there and then it befell that, talking to the gentle and learned

priests at Panadure—particularly to my dear and wise friend, Sri Weligama—I gave utterance to the suggestion that the temple and its appurtenances ought to be, and might be by amicable arrangements with the Hindoo College and by the favour of the Queen's Government, placed in the hands of a representative committee of the Buddhist nations.

I think there never was an idea which took root and spread so far and fast as that thrown out thus to the sunny temple-court at Panadure, amid the waving taliputs. Like those tropical plants which can almost be seen to grow, the suggestion quickly became an universal aspiration, first in Ceylon and next in other Buddhist countries. I was entreated to lay the plan before the Oriental authorities, which I did. I wrote to Sir Arthur Gordon, Governor of Ceylon, in these words: "I suggest a Governmental Act, which would be historically just, which would win the love and gratitude of all Buddhist populations and would reflect enduring honour upon English administration. The temple and enclosure at Buddha-Gaya are, as you know, the most sacred spots in all the world for the Buddhists. But Buddha-Gaya is occupied by a college of Saivite priests, who worship Mahadeva there, and deface the shrine with emblems and rituals foreign to its nature. That shrine and the ground surrounding it remain, however, government property, and there would be little difficulty, after proper and friendly negotiations, in procuring the departure of the Mahunt with his priests, and the transfer of the temple and

its grounds to the guardianship of Buddhists from Ceylon and elsewhere. I have consulted high authorities, among them General Cunningham, who thoroughly sympathises with the idea, and declares it entirely feasible ... I apprehend that a certain sum of money might be required to facilitate the transfer of the Brahmans, and to establish the Buddhist College. In my opinion, a lakh of rupees could not be expended by any government in a more profitable manner.

Sir Arthur, who had just been exploring Buddhist remains in Ceylon, was very well disposed to the idea. Lord Dufferin warmly received it, at Calcutta; Lord Connemara, in Madras; and at that time, if only the Home-Government had been more alive to a grand opportunity, it would have been easy to make satisfactory terms with the Brahmans, and to have effected the transfer of the holy place to a representative committee—at one stroke delighting and conciliating all Buddhistic Asia.

But two or three years passed by, and while the idea was spreading throughout Asia, and a large society had become established with the special purpose of acquiring the guardianship of the sacred site, the Mahant grew more exacting in his expectations, and clung closer to the possession of the temple. The letters which I received from the East showed that the old Brahman had memorialised the government, in his alarm or avarice, and that local authorities had for quiet's sake reported adversely to the negotiation. I think the Mahant was a good man. I had

never wished any but friendly and satisfactory arrangements with him. Yet if you walked in that spot which all these scores of millions of our race love so dearly, you would observe with shame and grief in the mango groves, to the east of Lilajan, ancient statues plastered to the walls of an irrigating well near the village Mucharin—identified with the “Muchalinda” tank. Stones carved with Buddha’s images are to be found used as weights to the levers for drawing water. I have seen ryots in the villages surrounding the temple using beautifully-carved blocks as steps to their huts. I have seen three feet high statues in an excellent state of preservation, buried under rubbish to the east of the Mahant’s baradari. A few are plastered into the eastern outer wall of the garden along the bank of Lilaian; and the Asoka pillars, the most ancient relics of the site—indeed “the most antique memorials of all India,”—which graced the temple pavement, are now used as posts of the Mahant’s kitchen.

To rectify this sad neglect, and to make the temple, what it should be, the living and learned center of purified Buddhism, money was not, and is not, lacking. If the Home-Government had seen its way to make the Hindoo Abbot well-disposed, I could have commanded any sum which might have seemed fair and necessary. But the idea was too intelligent for the official grasp, and the golden moment went by.

Nevertheless, Asia did not abandon its new desire, and I received so many, and such pressing, communications, that

I went at last to the then Indian Secretary of State, Lord Cross—always intelligent, kindly and receptive—and once more pleaded for the great restoration.

“Do you wish, Lord Cross”, I asked, “to have four hundred millions of Eastern peoples blessing your name night and day, and to be for ever remembered in Asia, like Alexander or Asoka, or Akbar the Great?”

“God bless my soul, yes,” answered the Minister; “and how is that to be done?”

Then I repeated all the facts, and produced so happy an effect upon the Indian Minister’s mind, that he promised to consult the Council, and to write—if the idea was approved—to Lord Landsdowne. In due time the Viceroy replied that the idea was legitimate and beneficial, and that so long as no religious ill-feeling was aroused, and no pecuniary grant asked from the Indian Treasury, the Calcutta Government would be inclined to favour any friendly negotiations. Thus the matter stood at my last visit to the east, when I was astonished and rejoiced to find how firmly the desire of this restoration had taken root, and how enkindled with the hope of it Ceylon, Siam, Burmah, and Japan had become. The Mahabodhi Society, established to carry out the scheme, was constituted as follows:

MAHABODHI SOCIETY

Patron:

Lozand Thub-Dan-Gya-Tcho, Grand Lama of Tibet

President:

Right Rev. H. Sumangala, Pradhana Nayaka Maha Sthavira of Ceylon

Vice Presidents:

The Ven. The Tathanabaing, Mandalay, Burmah.

Right Rev. Shaku Unsizo, Tokyo, Japan:

The Fang Tang, Yung-Ho-Kung, Peking, China. The Ven. Vaskaduve Subhuti, P.N.M., Ceylon. The Ven. V. Sri Sumangala, Ceylon.

Representatives:

Siam—H.R.H. Prince Chandradat Chudadhar, Bangkok.

Japan—S. Horiuchi, Esq., Indo-Buseki Kofuku Kwai, 1, Hachigo, Shiba Park, Tokyo.

Japan—The Secretary, the Society of Buddhist Affairs, Jokojoji, Teramachi-dori, Shojo Sagaru Kioto.

Ceylon—G. P. Weerasekera, Esq., Assistant Secretary, Mahabodhi Society, 61, Maliban Street, Colombo.

Burmah—Moung Hpo Mhyin, K.S.M., Secretary, Mahabodhi Society, 5. Commissioner's Road, Rangoon.

Burmah—Moung Hpay, Extra Assistant Commissioner, Thayetmyo.

Arakan—Chang Htoon Aung, Advocate, Htoon

Chan, B.A., B.L. Secretaries, Arakan Mahabodhi Society, Akyab.

Chittagong—Krishna Chandra Chowdhury, Secretary, Buddhist Aid Association, Raozan, Chittagong.

Darjeeling—(India)—Lama Ugyen Gyatsho, Tibetan Interpreter, Secretary, Mahabodhi Society, Darjeeling.

Calcutta—The Secretary, Calcutta Mahabodhi Society, 20-1, Gangadhur Babu's Lane, Bowbazar, Calcutta.

California—Philangi Dasa, Editor, Buddhist Ray, Santa Cruz, California, U.S.A.

New York—Charles T. Strauss, 466, Broadway, New York, U.S.A.

France—Baron Harden Hickey, Secretary, Bouddhique Propagande, Andilly par Montmorency, Seine-et-Oise, France.

All communications to be addressed to H. Dharmapala, General Secretary, Mahabodhi Society, 29, Baniapooker Road, Entally, Calcutta.

The purpose of the Society was thus stated:

“The site where the Divine Teacher attained supreme wisdom, now known as Buddha-Gaya, is in middle India, and to his followers there is no spot on earth more sacred than the Bodhimanda, whereon stands

the Bodhi-tree—

Never to fade, and ever to be kept
In homage of the world, beneath whose leaves
It was ordained the truth should come to
Buddha.

“At this hallowed spot, full of imperishable associations, it is proposed to re-establish a monastery for the residence of Bhikkhus representing the Buddhist countries of Tibet, Ceylon, China, Japan, Cambodia, Burmah, Chittagong, Nepal, Korea, and Arakan. We hope to found also a college at Buddha-Gaya for training young men of unblemished character, of whatsoever race and country, for the Buddhist Order (Sangha), on the lines of the ancient Buddhist University at Nalanda, where were taught the ‘Mahayana and also works belonging to the eighteen sects.’

“The study of Sanskrit, Pali and English will be made compulsory on all students. One or more Buddhist scholars from each of the Buddhist countries will in time be attached to the staff of teachers.

“To carry on this great and glorious work of Buddhist revival, after a torpor of seven hundred years whence dates the destruction of Buddhism in India, the Mahabodhi Society has been organised, and the promoters solicit sympathy and generous

support all the world over.”

To give some faint idea of the interest felt in this matter even among such remote communities as those of Japan, I will speak of a scene in Tokyo still vivid in my memory. Last summer, in the Japanese capital, the Buddhist High Priest, with certain of the fraternity begged me to come to the temple in Atagoshita and speak to the brethren about the Holy Places in India, and especially upon the prospects of acquiring for the Buddhist world the guardianship of the Temple of the Tree. In the cool, dark inner court of that Japanese *tera* the priests and their friends sate on the white mats in concentric circles, eagerly listening while I told them all about that three or four hundred miles of Indian country lying between Busti in Oudh and Buddha-Gaya in the Lower Provinces, which is the Holy Land of the “calm brethren of the yellow robe.” I spoke of the birthplace and death-place of the Gentle Teacher, and showed them pictures which I had myself taken of the ancient building at Isipatana outside Benares. The hot day, beating upon the hillside beyond the temple garden, shone upon the scarlet azaleas and the lotus buds in the garden-lake, and rendered it warm enough, even in that vast shadowy apartment, for a constant flutter of fans, while now and then a young priest from the outer circle would glide away for drinking-water. But when I came to point for them that site of the stately temple—which from its hollow beside Buddhist-tree, looks over the hill of the ‘Thousand Gardens,’ and marks the spot

where the whole religious history of Asia was transformed, and its manners for ever stamped with the merciful tenderness and indestructible hopes of Buddhism—those hundreds of priests and novices sate like rows of little children lost in a fairy story. The fans were laid aside; the shaven heads were craned forward in intense desire to hear every word; old men laid their hands to their ears, and young ones leaned towards me with clasped palms, to learn all about the Tree, and the Temple, and the broken statues, and the Hindoo priests who do not care for the spirit of the place, and who ought, in a friendly way, to yield it up, on proper conditions, to Buddhist guardianship. Every man present would have given all he possessed, I think to hope towards such an end. As for their unworthy guest, they lavished upon me marks of pleasure and gratitude; they spread me out an outrageously elaborate feast table in the temple pavilion, and sent with me back to my lodgings servants carrying presents of books and boxes of beautiful Japanese silks and embroideries. Since then the High Priest writes to me thus from Tokyo:

“After your regretted departure from Japan the IndoBusseki Kofuku Society has not been idle, and now I am glad to inform you that we are trying to buy a certain piece of land near each of the sacred sites according to your kind advice to us. Mr Dharmapala, of the Mahabodhi Society, is doing all he can to help us in India; and if everything goes as intended, a certain number of Japanese monks will start for India within this year.”

Thus is this new and great idea spreading, and the world will not be very much older, I think before Buddhism by this gateway goes back to its own land, and India becomes the natural center of Buddhistic Asia. For the moment I am sorry to say the movement has sustained a check. After a friendly correspondence in Sanskrit between the Mahant and myself, matters were looking fair for an arrangement, when—against my wish—hostile measures were commenced between the Mahabodhi Society and the Hindoo monks. Mr Dharmapala, the energetic secretary, whose enthusiastic services to the cause can never be sufficiently praised, and the example, of whose generous efforts ought to make him beloved throughout Buddhistic Asia, thought proper to place in the temple a very precious gilded image of Buddha, sent to his care from Japan. The Mahant's people ejected this, not without violence, and a series of lawsuits began. We gained the favourable decision of the resident official, and of the Sudder Court; but the High Court of Calcutta, by a judgment which I must respectfully declare erroneous and untenable, reversed the decree so that, after an expenditure of more than one hundred thousand rupees, and the bravest labours on the part of my excellent friend, Mr Dharmapala, the policy of appealing to law has failed.

I am, however, quite certain that my own policy of appealing to Reason and Right, and of relying upon friendly negotiations with the present Hindoo tenants of the shrine, will and must eventually prevail. It is a fixed purpose of my

mind that these shall prevail, and the first really enlightened Viceroy who takes up this question, will discern its huge political importance and assist me and my friends to obtain success. I suppose there are some people who will ask, why should the British public take any concern in such a movement? But such will be of much the same calibre as those who go about inquiring, "What is the British Empire to Battersea?" Apart from the immense historical, religious and social importance of Buddhism in Asia, here is an opportunity for the Government of India to gratify and conciliate half that continent by the easiest and least costly exercise of good-will. The Mahant and his college will, no doubt, have to be bought out and rather expensively, now that delays and misguided judgments have made him master of the bargaining. But if an enlightened Minister and Viceroy will, as they may, facilitate the arrangement, all must end well, and grateful Buddhists would furnish whatever cash is requisite. No orthodox Hindoos will be wounded in sentiment, because...the Mahant, as a Brahman and follower of San' aracharya, goes against his shastras by keeping control of a Buddhists' temple. However, it brings him so much personal dignity and so much money, that these things must be compounded for, no doubt; yet a well-disposed, collected and a far-seeing government could find a score of pleasant ways to make him willing to give up his tenure. There is no room left me to dwell upon all the happy consequences which would flow to the Indian Viceroyalty and to India herself from the good-will so created in

Burmah and Siam. Buddhism would return to the place of its birth, to elevate, to spiritualise, to help and enrich the population. It would be a new Asiatic crusade, triumphant without tears, or tyranny, or blood; and the Queen's administration would have the glory and benefit of it. *The Hindu of Madras*, a leading native journal, writes: "If there is anything in the intellectual and moral legacies of our forefathers of which we may feel proud, it is that sublime, pure and simple conception of a religious and moral system which the world owes to Buddha. Educated Hindoos cannot hesitate in helping Buddhism to find a commanding and permanent footing once more in their midst, and to live in mutually purifying amity with our Hinduism itself." Here is indeed, for an enlightened British Indian Minister, "a splendid opportunity."

(Reproduced from *The Daily Telegraph*, 1893)

Appendix 2

A Discourse of the Buddha

By Sir Edwin Arnold

Herewith a broken gem of Buddha's lore,
One beamlet of the brightness of his love!
Rose-light which lingers when the sun is down
Such space that men may find a path thereby,
Ananda told his Brethren of the robe
In the full Sangha, saying, "I have heard!"
Ananda said: "Upon a certain morn
At Rajagriha, in Vasanta time,
Lord Buddha sate—the great Tathagata—
Speaking with wayfarers words such as these.
There was a temple built to Surya
Between the dyers' sheds and grain-market,
With white porch sheltered by a peepal-tree:
Thereby he sate and the priest questioned Him—
"Which is life's chief good, Master" And he spake:
"Shadows are good when the high sun is flaming.
Some take their nest beneath the holy temple,
Some by the prison wall.

The king's gilt palace-roof shuts out the sunshine,
So doth the dyer's shed!
Which is the chiefest shade of all these shadows?"
"They are alike!" one said.
"So is it," quoth he: "with all shows of living:
As shadows fall, they fall!
Rest under, if ye must, but question not
Which is the best of all.
Yet some trees in the forest wave with fragrance
Of fruit and bloom o'erhead:
And some are evil-bearing, fruitless branches,
Whence poisonous air is spread.
Therefore, though be false, seek if ye must,
Right shelter from life's heat.
Lo! those do well who toil for wife and children
Treading the burning street!
Good is it helping kindred! good to dwell
Blameless and just to all:
Good to give alms, with good will in the heart,
Albeit the store be small!
Good to speak sweet and gentle words, to be
Merciful, patient, mild:
To hear the Law, and keep it, leading days
Innocent, undefiled.
These be chief goods—for evil by its like
Ends not, nor hate by hate;
By love hate ceaseth: by well-doing ill
By knowledge life's sad state.

But see where soars an eagle: mark those wings
Which cleave the blue, cool skies!
What shadow needeth you proud Lord of Air
To shield his fearless eyes
Rise from this life; lift upon pinions bold
Hearts free and great as his!
The eagle seeks no shadow, nor the wise
Greater or lesser bliss!"

Appendix 3

From the Dhammapada

By Sir Edwin Arnold

Thought in the mind hath made us. What we are
By thought was wrought and built. If a man's mind
Hath evil thoughts, pain comes on him as comes
The wheel the ox behind.

All that we are is what we thought and willed;
Our thoughts shape us and frame. If one endure
In purity of thought, joy follows him
As his own shadow—sure.

“He hath defamed me, wronged me, injured me,
Abased me, beaten me!” If one should keep
Thoughts like these angry words within his breast
Hatreds will never sleep.

“He hath defamed me, wronged me, injured me,
Abased me, beaten me!” If one shall send
Such angry words away for pardoning thoughts
Hatreds will have an end.

For never anywhere at any time
Did hatred cease by hatred. Always 'tis
By love that hatred ceases—only Love,
The ancient Law is this.

The many, who are foolish, have forgot—
Or never knew—how mortal wrongs pass by;
But they who know and who remember, let
Transient quarrels die.

Whoso abides, looking for joy, unschooled,
Gluttonous, weak, in idle luxuries,
Māra will overthrow him, as fierce winds
Level short-rooted trees.

Whoso abides, disowning joys, controlled,
Temperate, faithful, strong, shunning all ill,
Māra shall no more overthrow that man
Than the wind doth a hill.

Whoso Kashya wears—the yellow robe—
Being anishkashya—not sin-free,
Nor heeding truth and governance—unfit
To wear that dress is he.

But whoso, being nishkashiya pure,
Clean from offence, doth still in virtues dwell,
Regarding temperance and truth—that man
Weareth Kashya well.

Whoso imagines truth in the untrue,
And in the true finds untruth—he expires

Never attaining knowledge: life is waste;
He follows vain desires.

Whoso discerns in truth the true, and sees
The false in falseness with unblinded eye,
He shall attain to knowledge; life with such
Aims well before it die.

As rain breaks through an ill-thatched roof, so break
Passions through minds that holy thought despise:
As rain runs from a perfect thatch, so run
Passions from off the wise.

The evil-doer mourneth in this world,
And mourneth in the world to come; in both
He grieveth. When he sees fruits of his deeds
To see he will be loath.

The righteous man rejoiceth in this world
And in the world to come: in both he takes Pleasure.
When he shall see fruit of his works
The good sight gladness makes.

Glad is he riving, glad in dying, glad
Having once died; glad always, glad to know
What good deeds he hath done, glad to foresee
More good where he shall go.

The lawless man, who, not obeying Law,
Leaf after leaf he recites, and line by line,
No Buddhist is he, but a foolish herd
Who counts another's kine.

The Law-obeying, loving one, who knows
Only one verse of *Dharma*, but hath ceased
From envy, hatred, malice, foolishness—
He is the Buddhist Priest.

(Specially written for *The Buddhist*, Organ of the Colombo
Y.M.B.A., published in the issue of 12 July 1889.)

Notes

1. Here Arnold introduces a story which is not to be found in the Pali canon, nor is it recorded in the Mahayana text. He versifies that Gotama carried over his shoulders a lamb in the company of shepherds who drove a large number of animals for slaughter at a sacrifice. The reason for this error is not far to seek. Arnold himself admits that one of his sources was the Rev. Spence Hardy of the Wesleyan Mission, Ceylon, a writer on Buddhism in the middle of the last century. It is therefore no wonder that there is this Good Shepherd touch in Arnold's versification. Gotama's condemnation of animal sacrifices dates back not to his Bodhisatta period, as recorded in *The Light of Asia*, but to his Buddha period.

Another error has crept into Book the Fifth. Arnold places the story of Kisāgotamī and the mustard seed in the Bodhisatta period, whereas it belongs to the Buddha period.

2. This is incorrect, see later under Three Jātaka Stories).
3. Arnold did mention the previous 550 lives of the Buddha—namely, in Book Six: “In the third watch ... [on the night of enlightenment] he saw ... the line of all his lives

in all the worlds ... five hundred lives and fifty...." (BPS
Editor)

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