

GEMS OF BUDDHIST POETRY.*

DONE INTO ENGLISH VERSE.

BY THE EDITOR.

OURSELVES.

BY ourselves is evil done,
By ourselves we pain endure,
By ourselves we cease from wrong,
By ourselves become we pure.
No one saves us but ourselves ;
No one can, and no one may,
We ourselves must walk the path—
Buddhas merely teach the way.—Dh. 165.

UNFAILING.

Nowhere in the sky,
Nowhere in the sea,
Nor in the mountains high,
Is a place where we
From the fate of death can hide,
There in safety to abide.

Nowhere in the sky,
Nowhere in the sea,
Nor in the mountains high,
Is a place where we
From the curse of wrong can hide,
There in safety to abide.

* Selected from the Dhammapada, Sutta Nipata and other Buddhist Scriptures.

But where'er we roam,
 As our kin and friends
 Welcome us at home
 When our journey ends,
 So our good deeds, now done, will
 Future lives with blessing fill.—Dh. 127-8; 119-120.

THE HEART.

A hater makes a hater smart,
 The angry cause alarm;
 Yet does an ill-directed heart,
 Unto itself more harm.

Parents will help their children, sure,
 And other kin-folks will;
 But well-directed hearts procure
 A bliss that's greater still.—Dh. 42-43.

MIND.

Creatures from mind their character obtain,
 Mind-made they are, mind-marshalled they remain;
 Thus him whose mind corrupted thoughts imbue,
 Regret and pain unfailing will puruse.
 E'en so we see draught-oxen's heavy heel
 Close followed by the cart's o'erburdened wheel.

Creatures from mind their character obtain,
 Mind-made they are, mind-marshalled they remain;
 Thus him whose mind good and pure thoughts imbue
 Serenest bliss unfailing will pursue.
 E'en so we see things moving in the sun
 By their own shadows close attended on.—Dh. 1-2.

THE ROOF.

Into an ill-thatched house the rains
 Their entrance freely find;
 Thus passion surely access gains
 Into an untrained mind.

Into a well-thatched house the rains
 Their entrance cannot find;
 Thus passion never access gains
 Into a well-trained mind.—Dh. 13-14.

LIFE OR DEATH.

Earnestness leads to the State Immortal;
 Thoughtlessness is grim King Yama's portal.
 Those who earnest are will never die,
 While the thoughtless in death's clutches lie.—Dh. 21.

THE BANE OF MAN.

As fields are damaged by a bane,
 So 'tis conceit destroys the vain.
 As palaces are burned by fire,
 The angry perish in their ire.
 And as strong iron is gnawed by rust,
 So fools are wrecked through sloth and lust.
 —Dh. 258; 240.

BE RESOLUTE.

What should be done, ye do it,
 Nor let pass by the day:
 With vigor do your duty,
 And do it while you may.—Dh. 313.

THE UNCREATE.

Cut off the stream that in thy heart is beating:
 Drive out lust, sloth, and hate;
 And learnest thou that compound things are fleeting,
 Thou know'st the uncreate.—Dh. 383.

THE REALM OF THE UNCREATE.

Question:

Oh! Where can water, where can wind,
 Where fire and earth no footing find?
 Where disappears the "mine" and "thine,"
 Good, bad; long, short; and coarse and fine;
 And where do name and form both cease
 To find in nothingness release?

Answer:

'Tis in the realm of radiance bright,
 Invisible, eternal light,
 And infinite, a state of mind,
 There water, earth, and fire, and wind,
 And elements of any kind,
 Will nevermore a footing find;
 There disappears the "mine" and "thine,"
 Good, bad; long, short; and coarse, and fine.
 There, too, will name and form both cease,
 To find in nothingness release.—Digha-Nikaya, xi, 67.

THE EGO ILLUSION.

Mara, the Evil One:

So long as to the things
 Called "mine" and "I" and "me"
 Thy anxious heart still clings,
 My snares thou canst not flee.

The Disciple:

Naught's mine and naught of me,
 The self I do not mind!
 Thus Mara, I tell thee,
 My path thou canst not find.

—Samyutta Nikaya, iv, 2-9.

EGOTISM CONQUERED.

If like a broken gong
 Thou utterest no sound:
 Then only will Nirvâna,
 The end of strife be found.—Dh. 134.

TRANSCIENCY.

The king's mighty chariots of iron will rust,
 And also our bodies resolve into dust;
 But deeds, 'tis sure,
 For aye endure.—Dh. 151.

DEEDS LIVE ON.

Naught follows him who leaves this life;
 For all things must be left behind:

Wife, daughters, sons, one's kin, and friends,
 Gold, grain and wealth of every kind.
 But every deed a man performs,
 With body, or with voice, or mind,
 'Tis this that he can call his own,
 This will he never leave behind.

Deeds, like a shadow, ne'er depart :
 Bad deeds can never be concealed ;
 Good deeds cannot be lost and will
 In all their glory be revealed.
 Let all then noble deeds perform
 As seeds sown in life's fertile field ;
 For merit gained this life within,
 Rich blessings in the next will yield.

—Samyutta-Nikâya, iii, 2, 10

RIGHT AND WRONG.

Oh, would that the doer of right
 Should do the right again !
 Oh, would that he took delight
 In the constant doing of right :
 For when
 A man again and again does the good
 He shall enjoy beatitude.

Oh, would that the doer of wrong
 Should not do wrong again !
 Oh, would that he did not prolong
 His career of doing wrong ;
 For when
 From wrong a man will not refrain
 At last he'll have to suffer pain.—Dh. 118.

THE BUDDHA'S HYMN OF VICTORY.

Through many births I sought in vain
 The Builder of this house of pain.
 Now, Builder, thee I plainly see !
 This is the last abode for me.
 Thy gable's yoke, thy rafters broke,
 My heart has peace. All lust will cease.

—Dh. 153-154.

THE VICTOR.

Behold the muni wise and good
 His heart from passion free.
 He has attained to Buddhahood
 Beneath the Bodhi tree.

—Fo-ShoHing-Tsan-King, 1088.

THE LAW OF CAUSATION.

The Buddha did the cause unfold
 Of all the things that spring from causes ;
 And further the great sage has told
 How finally their passion pauses,

—Maha-Vagga i, 23³

THE BLISS OF THE GOSPEL.

So blest is an age in which Buddhas arise
 So blest is the truth's proclamation.
 So blest is the Sangha, concordant and wise,
 So blest a devout congregation !

And if by all the truth were known,
 More seeds of kindness would be sown,
 And richer crops of good deeds grown.—Dh. 194.

DEVOTION.

In the mountain hall we are taking our seats,
 In solitude calming the mind ;
 Still are our souls and in silence prepared
 By degrees the truth to find.

“Buddhist Chants and Processions,” *Journal of the Buddhist Text Society of India*, Vol. III, Part II.

EDIFICATION.

Vast as the sea
 Our heart shall be,
 And full of compassion and love
 Our thoughts shall soar
 Forevermore
 High, like the mountain dove.

We anxiously yearn
 From the Master to learn,
 Who found the path of salvation.
 We follow His lead
 Who taught us to read
 The problem of origination.

“Buddhist Chants and Processions,” *Journal
 of the Buddhist Text Society of India*, Vol.
 III, Part II.

HAPPINESS.

Happy is the Buddhist's fate
 For his heart knows not of hate.
 Haters may be all around
 Yet in him no hate is found.

Happy is the Buddhist's fate
 He all pining makes abate.
 Pining may seize all around
 Yet in him no pining's found.

Happy is the Buddhist's fate
 Him no greed will agitate.
 In the world may greed abound
 Yet in him no greed is found.

Happily then let us live,
 Joyously our service give,
 Quench all pining, hate, and greed:
 Happy is the life we lead.—Dh. 197-200.

BUDDHIST DOXOLOGY.

Bright shineth the sun in his splendor by day
 And bright the moon's radiance by night,
 Bright shineth the hero in battle array,
 And the sage in his thought shineth bright.
 But by day and by night, none so glorious so bright
 As Lord Buddha, the source of all spiritual light.

—Dh. 387.

BUDDHIST ETHICS.

Commit no wrong, but good deeds do,
 And let thy heart be pure.
 All Buddhas teach this doctrine true
 Which will for aye endure.—Dh. 183.

THE BEST WEAPONS.

With goodness meet an evil deed,
 With lovingkindness conquer wrath,
 With generosity quench greed,
 And lies, by walking in truth's path.—Dh. 223.

UNIVERSAL GOODWILL.

Suffuse the world with friendliness.
 Let creatures all, both mild and stern,
 See nothing that will bode them harm,
 And they the ways of peace will learn.
 —Chulla-Vagga, v, 6.

A GOOD OLD RULE.

Hate is not overcome by hate;
 By love alone 'tis quelled.
 This is a truth of ancient date,
 To-day still unexcelled.—Dh. 5.

BOUNDLESS LOVE.

Do not deceive, do not despise
 Each other, anywhere;
 Do not be angry, nor should ye
 Secret resentment bear.
 For as a mother risks her life
 And watches o'er her child,
 So boundless be your love to all
 So tender, kind and mild.
 Yea, cherish goodwill right and left
 All round, early and late,
 And without hindrance, without stint,
 From envy free and hate,
 While standing, walking, sitting down,
 Whate'er you have in mind,
 The rule of life that's always best
 Is to be loving-kind.—Mettasutta, 147-150.

THROUGHOUT THE FOUR QUARTERS.

The Tathagata's thoughts the four quarters pervade
 With his pure and unlimited love—
 With his love so profound and of noblest grade,
 Far reaching below and above.

As a powerful trumpeter makes himself heard,
 The four quarters around and about,
 So to all the world the Tathagata's word
 Goeth forth and leaveth none out.—

—Teviggasutta, iii, 1-2.

SWEETER.

Sweet in the world is fatherhood,
 And motherhood is sweet;
 But sweeter is the thought of good,
 If nobly our heart beat.

Sweeter a life to old age spent
 In truth and purity;
 Sweeter, to reach enlightenment
 And keep from evil free.—Dh. 332-333.

IN THE WORLD, NOT OF THE WORLD.

As lilies on a dung-heap grow
 Sweet-scented, pure and fine,
 Among the vulgar people, so
 Should the disciple shine.—Dh. 58-59.

BEATITUDE.

Cherishing father and mother,
 And wife and children: this
 And love of a peaceful calling,
 Truly, is greatest bliss.

Practising lovingkindness,
 Befriending one's kindred: this
 And to lead a life that is blameless,
 Truly is greatest bliss.

Self-control and wisdom,
 The four noble truths,—all this,
 And attainment of Nirvana,
 Truly is greatest bliss.

—Sutta-Nipata, 261-2; 266.

KARMA.

Plain is the law of deeds
 Yet deep, it makes us pause :
 The harvest's like the seeds,
 Results are like their cause.
 Apply thy will
 To noble use,
 Good deeds bring forth no ill,
 Bad deeds no good produce.

—From the Author's *Karma*.

A BUDDHIST MAXIM.

Who injureth others
 Himself hurteth sore ;
 Who others assisteth
 Himself helpeth more.
 Let th'illusion of self
 From your mind disappear,
 And you'll find the way sure ;
 The path will be clear.

—From the Author's *Karma*.

AT THE GRAVE.

How transient are things mortal!
 How restless is man's life!
 But Peace stands at the portal
 Of Death, and ends all strife.

Life is a constant parting—
 One more the stream has crossed ;
 But think ye who stand stand smarting
 Of that which ne'er is lost.

All rivers flowing, flowing,
 Must reach the distant main;
 The seeds which we are sowing
 Will ripen into grain.—Old Buddhist Song.

THE GOAL.

Life's solace lies in aspirations
 Which will remain when we are gone.
 Immortal through time's transformations
 Is he whose soul with truth grows one.
 He hath attained life's inmost center,
 The realm where death can never enter.

My heart expandeth with emotion
 To be an agent of Truth's laws.
 As rivers sink into the ocean,
 So I'll be one with Love's great cause.
 Love leadeth to life's inmost center.
 The realm where death can never enter.

AMITHABHA.

O Amithabha, wondrous thought,
 O wisdom which Lord Buddha taught!
 Profound and full of beauty.
 Thou, the abiding and sublime,
 Art never moved in change of time.
 Thou teacher of life's duty.
 Brighten,
 Enlighten,
 Cleanse from error,
 Free from terror;
 Newly quicken
 Those who are with blindness stricken!

Thou, Reason's norm inviolate
 Truth universal, uncreate;
 Right answer to life's query.
 To thinkers thou art nature's law,
 The prophet thou inspir'st with awe,
 And givest strength the weary.
 Filling

And stilling
All the yearning
Of souls, burning
For resplendent
Glories of the realms transcendent.

Oh use life's moments as they flee
In aspect of eternity ;
In acts abides the actor.
Eternal truth when understood
Turns curse to bliss, the bad to good.
Make truth thy life's great factor,
Sowing
Seeds, growing,
Never waning,
But attaining,
To resplendent
Glories of the realms transcendent.