

*Proverbial Wisdom
from the Hitopadesha*



Translated by Sir Edwin Arnold

From E. Arnold. *Indian Poetry*. (4th ed.) London: Trübner & Co., 1886; pp. 225-70.

*This Book of Counsel read, and you shall see,
Fair speech and Sanskrit lore, and Policy.*

Wise men, holding wisdom highest, scorn delights, more false than fair;
Daily live as if Death's fingers twined already in thy hair!

Truly, richer than all riches, better than the best of gain,
Wisdom is; unbought, secure — once won, none loseth her again.

Bringing dark things into daylight, solving doubts that vex the mind,
Like an open eye is Wisdom — he that hath her not is blind.

Childless art thou? dead thy children? leaving thee to want and doole?¹
Less thy misery than his is, who lives father to a fool.

One wise son makes glad his father, forty fools avail him not:
One moon silvers all that darkness which the silly stars did dot.

Ease and health, obeisant children, wisdom, and a fair-voiced wife —
Thus, great King! are counted up the five felicities of life.

For the son the sire is honoured; though the bow-cane bendeth true,
Let the strained string crack in using, and what service shall it do?

That which will not be, will not be — and what is to be, will be:
Why not drink this easy physic, antidote of misery?

¹ [grieve]

Nay! but faint not, idly sighing, “Destiny is mightiest,”
Sesamum holds oil in plenty, but it yieldeth none unpressed.

Ah! it is the Coward’s babble, “Fortune taketh, Fortune gave”;
Fortune! rate her like a master, and she serves thee like a slave.

Two-fold is the life we live in — Fate and Will together run:
Two wheels bear life’s chariot onward — Will it move on only one?

Look! the clay dries into iron, but the potter moulds the clay:
Destiny to-day is master — Man was master yesterday.

Worthy ends come not by wishing. Wouldst thou? Up, and win it, then!
While the hungry lion slumbers, not a deer comes to his den.

Silly glass, in splendid settings, something of the gold may gain;
And in company of wise ones, fools to wisdom may attain.

Labours spent on the unworthy, of reward the labourer balk;
Like the parrot, teach the heron twenty words, he will not talk.

Ah! a thousand thoughts of sorrow, and a hundred things of dread,
By the fools unheeded, enter day by day the wise man’s head.

Of the day’s impending dangers, Sickness, Death, and Misery,
One will be; the wise man, waking, ponders which that one will be.

Good things come not out of bad things; wisely leave a longed-for ill.
Nectar being mixed with poison serves no purpose but to kill.

Give to poor men, son of Kuntī¹ — on the wealthy waste not wealth;
Good are simples for the sick man, good for nought to him in health.

Be his Scripture-learning wondrous, yet the cheat will be a cheat;
Be her pasture ne’er so bitter, yet the cow’s milk will taste sweet.

¹ [Wife of King Pāndu and Mother of three of the Pāndavas, foes of their cousins, the Kauravas, in the *Mahābhārata*.]

Trust not water, trust not weapons; trust not clawed nor horned things;
Neither give thy soul to women, nor thy life to Sons of Kings.

Look! the Moon, the silver roamer, from whose splendour darkness flies,
With his starry cohorts marching, like a crowned king, through the skies:

All his grandeur, all his glory, vanish in the Dragon's jaw;
What is written on the forehead, that will be, and nothing more.

Counsel in danger; of it
Unwarned, be nothing begun;
But nobody asks a Prophet,
Shall the risk of a dinner be run?

Avarice begetteth anger; blind desires from her begin;
A right fruitful mother is she of a countless spawn of sin.

Be second and not first! — the share's the same
If all go well. If not, the Head's to blame.

Passion will be Slave or Mistress: follow her, she brings to woe;
Lead her, 'tis the way to Fortune. Choose the path that thou wilt go.

When the time of trouble cometh, friends may ofttimes irk us most:
For the calf at milking-hour the mother's leg is tying-post.

In good-fortune not elated, in ill-fortune not dismayed,
Ever eloquent in council, never in the fight affrayed,
Proudly emulous of honour, steadfastly on wisdom set;
These six virtues in the nature of a noble soul are met.
Whoso hath them, gem and glory of the three wide worlds is he;
Happy mother she that bore him, she who nursed him on her knee.

Small things wax exceeding mighty, being cunningly combined;
Furious elephants are fastened with a rope of grass-blades twined.

Let the household hold together, though the house be ne'er so small;
Strip the rice-husk from the rice-grain, and it groweth not at all.

Sickness, anguish, bonds, and woe
Spring from wrongs wrought long ago.

Keep wealth for want, but spend it for thy wife,
And wife, and wealth, and all, to guard thy life.

Death, that must come, comes nobly when we give
Our wealth, and life, and all, to make men live.

Floating on his fearless pinions, lost amid the noonday skies,
Even thence the Eagle's vision kens the carcass where it lies;
But the hour that comes to all things comes unto the Lord of Air,
And he rushes, madly blinded, to die helpless in the snare.

Bar thy door not to the stranger, be he friend or be he foe,
For the tree will shade the woodman while his axe doth lay it low.

Greeting fair, and room to rest in; fire, and water from the well —
Simple gifts — are given freely in the house where good men dwell; —

Young, or bent with many winters; rich, or poor, whate'er thy guest,
Honour him for thine own honour — better is he than the best.

Pity them that crave thy pity: who art thou to stint thy hoard,
When the holy moon shines equal on the leper and the lord?

When thy gate is roughly fastened, and the asker turns away,
Thence he bears thy good deeds with him, and his sins on thee doth lay.

In the house the husband ruleth; men the Brahman mastercall;
Agni is the Twice-born's Master — but the guest is lord of all.

He who does and thinks no wrong —
He who suffers, being strong —
He whose harmlessness men know —
Unto Swarga¹ such doth go.

¹ [In Hindu philosophy, a heavenly abode — also called Indraloka, or Svarloka, said to be situated on Mount Meru. It corresponds to the Tibetan term Devachan.]

In the land where no wise men are, men of little wit are lords;
And the castor-oil's a tree, where no tree else its shade affords.

Foe is friend, and friend is foe,
As our actions make them so.

That friend only is the true friend who abides when trouble comes;
That man only is the brave man who can bear the battle-drums;
Words are wind; deed proveth promise: he who helps at need is kin;
And the leal¹ wife is loving though the husband lose or win.

Friend and kinsman — more their meaning than the idle-hearted mind;
Many a friend can prove unfriendly, many a kinsman less than kind:
He who shares his comrade's portion, be he beggar, be he lord,
Comes as truly, comes as duly, to the battle as the board —
Stands before the king to succour, follows to the pile to sigh —
He is friend, and he is kinsman; less would make the name a lie.

Stars gleam, lamps flicker, friends foretell of fate;
The fated sees, knows, hears them — all too late.

Absent, flatterers' tongues are daggers — present, softer than the silk;
Shun them! 'tis a draught of poison hidden under harmless milk;
Shun them when they promise little! Shun them when they promise much!
For enkindled, charcoal burneth — cold, it doth defile the touch.

In years, or moons, or half-moons three,
Or in three days — suddenly,
Knives are shent² — true men go free.

Anger comes to noble natures, but leaves there no strife or storm:
Plunge a lighted torch beneath it, and the ocean grows not warm.

Noble hearts are golden vases — close the bond true metals make;
Easily the smith may weld them, harder far it is to break.

¹ [faithful and true]

² [disgraced, dishonoured]

Evil hearts are earthen vessels — at a touch they crack a-twain,
And what craftsman's ready cunning can unite the shards again?

Good men's friendships may be broken, yet abide they friends at heart;
Snap the stem of Luxmee's lotus, but its fibres will not part.

One foot goes, and one foot stands,
When the wise man leaves his lands.

Over-love of home were weakness; wheresoe'er the hero come,
Stalwart arm and steadfast spirit find or make for him a home.
Little recks¹ the awless lion where his hunting jungles lie —
When he enters them be certain that a royal prey shall die.

Very feeble folk are poor folk; money lost takes wit away:
All their doings fail like runnels, wasting through the summer day.

Wealth is friends, home, father, brother — title to respect and fame;
Yea, and wealth is held for wisdom — that it should be so is shame.

Home is empty to the childless; hearts to those who friends deplore:
Earth unto the idle-minded; and the three worlds to the poor.

Say the sages, nine things name not: Age, domestic joys and woes,
Counsel, sickness, shame, alms, penance; neither Poverty disclose.
Better for the proud of spirit, death, than life with losses told;
Fire consents to be extinguished, but submits not to be cold.

As Age doth banish beauty,
As moonlight dies in gloom,
As Slavery's menial duty
Is Honour's certain tomb;
As Hari's name and Hara's²
Spoken, charm sin away,
So Poverty can surely
A hundred virtues slay.

Half-known knowledge, present pleasure purchased with a future woe,
And to taste the salt of service — greater griefs no man can know.

All existence is not equal, and all living is not life;
Sick men live; and he who, banished, pines for children, home, and wife;
And the craven-hearted eater of another's leavings lives,
And the wretched captive, waiting for the word of doom, survives;

¹ [cares for]

² [Hari is Vishnu and Hara, Shiva; often combined as Harihara.]

But they bear an anguished body, and they draw a deadly breath;
And life cometh to them only on the happy day of death.

Golden gift, serene Contentment! have thou that, and all is had;
Thrust thy slipper on, and think thee that the earth is leather-clad.

All is known, digested, tested; nothing new is left to learn
When the soul, serene, reliant, Hope's delusive dreams can spurn.

Hast thou never watched, a-waiting till the great man's door unbarred?
Didst thou never linger parting, saying many a sad last word?
Spak'st thou never word of folly, one light thing thou would'st recall?
Rare and noble hath thy life been! fair thy fortune did befall!

True Religion! — 'tis not blindly prating what the gurus prate,
But to love, as God hath loved them, all things, be they small or great;
And true bliss is when a sane mind doth a healthy body fill;
And true knowledge is the knowing what is good and what is ill.

Poisonous though the tree of life be, two fair blossoms grow thereon:
One, the company of good men; and sweet songs of Poets, one.

Give, and it shall swell thy getting; give, and thou shalt safer keep:
Pierce the tank-wall; or it yieldeth, when the water waxeth deep.

When the miser hides his treasure in the earth, he doeth well;
For he opens up a passage that his soul may sink to hell.

He whose coins are kept for counting, not to barter nor to give,
Breathe he like a blacksmith's bellows, yet in truth he doth not live.

Gifts, bestowed with words of kindness, making giving doubly dear:
Wisdom, deep, complete, benignant, of all arrogancy clear;
Valour, never yet forgetful of sweet Mercy's pleading prayer;
Wealth, and scorn of wealth to spend it — oh! but these be virtues rare!

Sentences of studied wisdom, nought avail they unapplied;
Though the blind man hold a lantern, yet his footsteps stray aside.

Would'st thou know whose happy dwelling Fortune entereth unknown?
His, who careless of her favour, standeth fearless in his own;
His, who for the vague to-morrow bartereth not the sure to-day —
Master of himself, and sternly steadfast to the rightful way:
Very mindful of past service, valiant, faithful, true of heart —
Unto such comes Lakshmi smiling — comes, and will not lightly part.

Be not haughty, being wealthy; droop not, having lost thine all;
Fate doth play with mortal fortunes as a girl doth toss her ball.

Worldly friendships, fair but fleeting; shadows of the clouds at noon;
Women, youth, new corn, and riches; these be pleasures passing soon.

For thy bread be not o'er thoughtful — Heav'n for all hath taken thought:
When the babe is born, the sweet milk to the mother's breast is brought.

He who gave the swan her silver, and the hawk her plumes of pride,
And his purples to the peacock — He will verily provide.

Though for good ends, waste not on wealth a minute;
Mud may be wiped, but wise men plunge not in it.

Brunettes, and the Banyan's shadow,
Well-springs, and a brick-built wall,
Are all alike cool in the summer,
And warm in the winter — all.

Ah! the gleaming, glancing arrows of a lovely woman's eye!
Feathered with her jetty lashes, perilous they pass thee by:
Loosed at venture from the black bows of her arching brow, they part,
All too penetrant and deadly for an undefended heart.

Beautiful the Koil¹ seemeth for the sweetness of his song,
Beautiful the world esteemeth pious souls for patience strong;
Homely features lack not favour when true wisdom they reveal,
And a wife is fair and honoured while her heart is firm and leal.

¹ [Koel or Indian cuckoo]

Friend! gracious word! — the heart to tell is ill able
Whence came to men this jewel of a syllable.

Whoso for greater quits small gain,
Shall have his labour for his pain;
The things unwon unwon remain,
And what was won is lost again.

Looking down on lives below them, men of little store are great;
Looking up to higher fortunes, hard to each man seems his fate.

As a bride, unwisely wedded, shuns the cold caress of eld,
So, from coward souls and slothful, Lakshmi's favours turn repelled.

Ease, ill-health, home-keeping, sleeping, woman-service, and content —
In the path that leads to greatness these be six obstructions sent.

Seeing how the soorma¹ wasteth, seeing how the anthill grows,
Little adding unto little — live, give, learn, as life-time goes.

Drops of water falling, falling, falling, brim the chatty o'er;
Wisdom comes in little lessons — little gains make largest store.

Men their cunning schemes may spin —
God knows who shall lose or win.

Shoot a hundred shafts, the quarry lives and flies — not due to death;
When his hour is come, a grass-blade hath a point to stop his breath.

Robes were none, nor oil of unction, when the King of Beasts was crowned:
'Twas his own fierce roar proclaimed him, rolling all the kingdom round.

¹ [Brave warrior?]

What but for their vassals,
Elephant and man —
Swing of golden tassels,
Wave of silken fan —
But for regal manner
That the “Chattra”¹ brings,
Horse, and foot, and banner —
What would come of kings?

At the work-time, asking wages — is it like a faithful herd?
When the work’s done, grudging wages — is *that* acting like a lord?

Serve the Sun with sweat of body; starve thy maw to feed the flame;
Stead thy lord with all thy service; to thy death go, quit of blame.

Many prayers for him are uttered whereon many a life relies;
’Tis but one poor fool the fewer when the greedy jack-daw dies.

Give thy Dog the merest mouthful, and he crouches at thy feet,
Wags his tail, and fawns, and grovels, in his eagerness to eat;
Bid the Elephant be feeding, and the best of fodder bring;
Gravely — after much entreaty — condescends that mighty king.

By their own deeds men go downward, by them men mount upward all,
Like the diggers of a well, and like the builders of a wall.

Rushes down the hill the crag, which upward ‘twas so hard to roll:
So to virtue slowly rises — so to vice quick sinks the soul.

Who speaks unasked, or comes unhid,
Or counts on service — will be chid.

Wise, modest, constant, ever close at hand,
Not weighing but obeying all command,
Such servant by a Monarch’s throne may stand.

¹ [Parasol or umbrella, symbol of protection and royalty]

Pitiful, who fearing failure, therefore no beginning makes,
Why forswear a daily dinner for the chance of stomach-aches?

Nearest to the King is dearest, be thy merit low or high;
Women, creeping plants, and princes, twine round that which groweth nigh.

Pearls are dull in leaden settings, but the setter is to blame;
Glass will glitter like the ruby, dulled with dust — are they the same?

And a fool may tread on jewels, setting in his turban glass;
Yet, at selling, gems are gems, and fardels¹ but for fardels pass.

Horse and weapon, lute and volume, man and woman, gift of speech,
Have their uselessness or uses in the one who owneth each.

Not disparagement nor slander kills the spirit of the brave;
Fling a torch down, upward ever burns the brilliant flame it gave.

Wisdom from the mouth of children be it overpast of none;
What man scorns to walk by lamplight in the absence of the sun?

Strength serves Reason. Saith the Mahout, when he beats the brazen drum,
“Ho! ye elephants, to this work must your mightinesses come.”

Mighty natures war with mighty: when the raging tempests blow,
O'er the green rice harmless pass they, but they lay the palm-trees low.

Narrow-necked to let out little, big of belly to keep much,
As a flagon is — the Vizier of a Sultan should be such.

He who thinks a minute little, like a fool misuses more;
He who counts a cowry nothing, being wealthy, will be poor.

¹ [burdens]

Brahmans, soldiers, these and kinsmen — of the three set none in charge:
For the Brahman, though you rack him, yields no treasure small or large;
And the soldier, being trusted, writes his quittance with his sword,
And the kinsman cheats his kindred by the charter of the word;
But a servant old in service, worse than any one is thought,
Who, by long-tried license fearless, knows his master's anger nought.

Never tires the fire of burning, never wearies Death of slaying,
Nor the sea of drinking rivers, nor the bright-eyed of betraying.

From false friends that breed thee strife,
From a house with serpents strife,
Saucy slaves and brawling wife —
Get thee forth, to save thy life.

Teeth grown loose, and wicked-hearted ministers, and poison trees,
Pluck them by the roots together; 'tis the thing that giveth ease.

Long-tried friends are friends to cleave to — never leave thou these i' the lurch:
What man shuns the fire as sinful for that once it burned a church?

Raise an evil soul to honour, and his evil bents remain;
Bind a cur's tail ne'er so straightly, yet it curleth up again.

How, in sooth, should Trust and Honour change the evil nature's root?
Though one watered them with nectar, poison-trees bear deadly fruit.

Safe within the husk of silence guard the seed of counsel so
That it break not — being broken, then the seedling will not grow.

Even as one who grasps a serpent, drowning in the bitter sea,
Death to hold and death to loosen — such is life's perplexity.

Woman's love rewards the worthless — kings of knaves exalters be;
Wealth attends the selfish niggard, and the cloud rains on the sea.

Many a knave wins fair opinions standing in fair company,
As the sooty soorma pleases, lighted by a brilliant eye.

Where the azure lotus blossoms, there the alligators hide;
In the sandal-tree are serpents. Pain and pleasure live allied.

Rich the sandal — yet no part is but a vile thing habits there;
Snake and wasp haunt root and blossom; on the boughs sit ape and bear.

As a bracelet of crystal, once broke, is not mended
So the favour of princes, once altered, is ended.

Wrath of kings, and rage of lightning — both be very full of dread;
But one falls on one man only — one strikes many victims dead.

All men scorn the soulless coward who his manhood doth forget:
On a lifeless heap of ashes fearlessly the foot is set.

Simple milk, when serpents drink it, straightway into venom turns;
And a fool who heareth counsel all the wisdom of it spurns.

A modest manner fits a maid,
And Patience is a man's adorning;
But brides may kiss, nor do amiss,
And men may draw, at scathe and scorning.

Serving narrow-minded masters dwarfs high natures to their size:
Seen before a convex mirror, elephants do show as mice.

Elephants destroy by touching, snakes with point of tooth beguile;
Kings by favour kill, and traitors murder with a fatal smile.

Of the wife the lord is jewel, though no gems upon her beam;
Lacking him, she lacks adornment, howsoe'er her jewels gleam!

Hairs three-lakhs, and half-a-lakh hairs, on a man so many grow —
And so many years to Swarga shall the true wife surely go!

When the faithful wife, embracing tenderly her husband dead,
Mounts the blazing pyre beside him, as it were a bridal-bed;

Though his sins were twenty thousand, twenty thousand times o'er-told,
She shall bring his soul to splendour, for her love so large and bold.

Counsel unto six ears spoken, unto all is notified:
When a King holds consultation, let it be with one beside.

Sick men are for skilful leeches — prodigals for poisoning —
Fools for teachers — and the man who keeps a secret, for a King.

With gift, craft, promise, cause thy foe to yield;
When these have failed thee, challenge him a-field.

The subtle wash of waves do smoothly pass,
But lay the tree as lowly as the grass.

Ten true bowmen on a rampart fifty's onset may sustain;
Fortalices keep a country more than armies in the plain.

Build it strong, and build it spacious, with an entry and retreat;
Store it well with wood and water, fill its garners full with wheat.

Gems will no man's life sustain;
Best of gold is golden grain.

Hard it is to conquer nature: if a dog were made a King,
'Mid the coronation trumpets he would gnaw his sandal-string.

'Tis no Council where no Sage is — 'tis no Sage that fears not Law;
'Tis no Law which Truth confirms not — 'tis no Truth which Fear can awe.

Though base be the Herald, nor hinder nor let,
For the mouth of a king is he;
The sword may be whet, and the battle set,
But the word of his message goes free.

Better few and chosen fighters than of shaven-crowns a host,
For in headlong flight confounded, with the base the brave are lost.

Kind is kin, howe'er a stranger — kin unkind is stranger shown;
Sores hurt, though the body breeds them — drugs relieve, though desert-grown.

Betel-nut is bitter, hot, sweet, spicy, binding, alkaline —
A demulcent — an astringent — foe to evils intestine;
Giving to the breath a fragrance — to the lips a crimson red;
A detergent, and a kindler of Love's flame that lieth dead.
Praise the Gods for the good betel! — these be thirteen virtues given,
Hard to meet in one thing blended, even in their happy heaven.

He is brave whose tongue is silent of the trophies of his sword;
He is great whose quiet bearing marks his greatness well assured.

When the Priest, the Leech, the Vizier of a King his flatterers be,
Very soon the King will part with health, and wealth and piety.

Merciless, or money-loving, deaf to counsel, false of faith,
Thoughtless, spiritless, or careless, changing course with every breath,
Or the man who scorns his rival — if a prince should choose a foe,
Ripe for meeting and defeating, certes he would choose him so.

By the valorous and unskilful great achievements are not wrought;
Courage, led by careful Prudence, unto highest ends is brought.

Grief kills gladness, winter summer, midnight-gloom the light of day,
Kindnesses, [in]gratitude, and pleasant friends drive pain away;
Each ends each, but none of other surer conquerors can be
Than Impolicy of Fortune — of Misfortune Policy.

Wisdom answers all who ask her, but a fool she cannot aid;
Blind men in the faithful mirror see not their reflection made.

Where the Gods are, or thy Guru — in the face of Pain and Age,
Cattle, Brahmans, Kings, and Children — reverently curb thy rage.

Oh, my Prince! on eight occasions prodigality is none —
In the solemn sacrificing, at the wedding of a son,
When the glittering treasure given makes the proud invader bleed,
Or its lustre bringeth comfort to the people in their need,
Or when kinsmen are to succour, or a worthy work to end,
Or to do a loved one honour, or to welcome back a friend.

Truth, munificence, and valour, are the virtues of a King;
Royalty, devoid of either, sinks to a rejected thing.

Hold thy vantage! — alligators on the land make none afraid;
And the lion's but a jackal who hath left his forest-shade.

The people are the lotus-leaves, their monarch is the sun —
When he doth sink beneath the waves they vanish every one.
When he doth rise they rise again with bud and blossom rife,
To bask awhile in his warm smile, who is their lord and life.

All the cows bring forth are cattle — only now and then is born
An authentic lord of pastures, with his shoulder-scratching horn.

When the soldier in the battle lays his life down for his king,
Unto Swarga's perfect glory such a deed his soul shall bring.

'Tis the fool who, meeting trouble, straightway Destiny reviles,
Knowing not his own misdoing brought his own mischance the whiles.

"Time-not-come" and "Quick-at-Peril," these two fishes 'scaped the net;
"What-will-be-will-be," he perished, by the fishermen beset.

Sex, that tires of being true,
Base and new is brave to you!
Like the jungle-cows ye range,
Changing food for sake of change.

That which will not be will not be, and what is to be will be:
Why not drink this easy physic, antidote of misery?

Whoso trusts, for service rendered, or fair words, an enemy,
Wakes from folly like one falling in his slumber from a tree.

Fellow be with kindly foemen, rather than with friends unkind;
Friend and foeman are distinguished not by title but by mind.

Whoso setting duty highest, speaks at need unwelcome things,
Disregarding fear and favour, such an one may succour kings.

Brahmans for their lore have honour; Kshattriyas for their bravery;
Vaisyas for their hard-earned treasure; Sudras for humility.

Seven foemen of all foemen, very hard to vanquish be:
The Truth-teller; the Just-dweller, and the man from passion free,
Subtle, self-sustained, and counting frequent -well-won victories,
And the man of many kinsmen — keep the peace with such as these.

For the man with many kinsmen answers by them all attacks;
As the bambu, in the bambus safely sheltered, scorns the axe.

Whoso hath the gift of giving wisely, equitably, well;
Whoso, learning all men's secrets, unto none his own will tell:
Whoso, ever cold and courtly, utters nothing that offends,
Such an one may rule his fellows unto Earth's extremest ends.

Cheating them that truly trust you, 'tis a clumsy villany!
Any knave may slay the child who climbs and slumbers on his knee.

Hunger hears not, cares not, spares not; no boon of the starving beg;
When the snake is pinched with craving, verily she eats her egg.

Of the Tree of State the root
Kings are — feed what brings the fruit.

Courtesy may cover malice; on their *heads* the woodmen bring,
Meaning all the while to burn them, logs and faggots — oh, my King!
And the strong and subtle river, rippling at the cedar's foot,
While it seems to lave and kiss it, undermines the hanging root.

Weep not! Life the hired nurse is, holding us a little space;
Death, the mother who doth take us back into our proper place.

Gone, with all their gauds and glories: gone, like peasants, are the Kings,
Whereunto this earth was witness, whereof all her record rings.

For the body, daily wasting, is not seen to waste away,
Until wasted; as in water set a jar of unbaked clay.

And day after day man goeth near and nearer to his fate,
As step after step the victim thither where its slayers wait.

Like as a plank of drift-wood
Tossed on the watery main,
Another plank encountered,
Meets, — touches, — parts again;
So tossed, and drifting ever,
On life's unresting sea,
Men meet, and greet, and sever,
Parting eternally.

Halt, traveller! rest i' the shade: then up and leave it!
Stay, Soul! take fill of love; nor losing, grieve it!

Each beloved object born
Sets within the heart a thorn,
Bleeding, when they be uptorn.

If thine own house, this rotting frame, doth wither,
Thinking another's lasting — goest thou thither?

Meeting makes a parting sure,
Life is nothing but death's door.

As the downward-running rivers never turn and never stay,
So the days and nights stream deathward, bearing human lives away.

Bethinking him of darkness grim, and death's unshunned pain,
A man strong-souled relaxes hold, like leather soaked in rain.

From the day, the hour, the minute,
Each life quickens in the womb;
Thence its march, no falter in it,
Goes straight forward to the tomb.

An 'twere not so, would sorrow cease with years?
Wisdom sees right what want of knowledge fears.

Seek not the wild, sad heart! thy passions haunt it;
Play hermit in thy house with heart undaunted;
A governed heart, thinking no thought but good,
Makes crowded houses holy solitude.


Away with those that preach to us the washing off of sin —
Thine own self is the stream for thee to make ablutions in:

In self-restraint it rises pure — flows clear in tide of truth,
By widening banks of wisdom, in waves of peace and truth.

Bathe there, thou son of Pāndu! with reverence and rite,
For never yet was water wet could wash the spirit white.

Thunder for nothing, like December's cloud,
Passes unmarked: strike hard, but speak not loud.

Minds deceived by evil natures, from the good their faith withhold;
When hot conjee¹ once has burned them, children blow upon the cold.



¹ [Rice porridge]