

The Green Sheaf



PRINCE SIDDARTHA.

I.

ONCE there was a young Prince in the East, the heir to a great throne ; he lived in a gorgeous Palace, surrounded by all the delights of the senses ; and the knowledge of the great ills of humanity—of old age, of sickness, and of death—was most carefully excluded from him. The fancy took him one day to see what lay beyond the high walls of his garden ; so he sent for his attendants with his bearers, and had himself borne towards the city. He had not gone far, when he was astonished to see a bent, weak and toothless figure crouching by the roadside. He asked what ailed this creature, that he was come to such a pitiable and disgusting state. He was told that such was the effect time had on people, that his state must unavoidably come to all alike ; and that it was called old age : that he himself, young and happy Prince though he was, must in time become such as that which now so startled and disgusted him. Thereupon he turned back towards the Palace, and, having arrived there, he locked himself into his own room that he might think over what he had seen and heard.