

TALE XIV.

THE sprite said, "Attend, King Vikram! There is a city named Kusmāvati, of which one Subichār was king, whose daughter's name was Chandra-prabhā. When she became marriageable, she went out one spring day, along with her companions, to stroll about in the garden. Now, before arrangements had been made for the ladies to come out (*i.e.*, before the garden had been cleared of all strangers and others not permitted to set eyes on the women), a Brahman's son, named Manswī, of twenty years or so, very handsome, had come into the garden in the course of his wanderings, and meeting with cool shade under a tree, had fallen asleep there. The king's attendants came and made arrangements for the ladies of the seraglio in the garden, but it so happened that none of them saw the Brahman's son sleeping there; and so he continued sleeping under that tree, and the princess entered the garden with her attendants. Strolling about with her companions, where does she come but to the place where the Brahman's son was

sleeping! She no sooner arrived there than he also awoke at the sound of the people's footsteps. The eyes of both met; and to such a degree did they come under Cupid's power, that on the one side the Brahman's son fell upon the ground in a swoon, on the other, she too was so beside herself, that her legs began to tremble. Her companions, however, quickly laid hold of her on the very instant. At last, they laid her down in a litter, and brought her home. And the Brahman's son was lying in so complete a state of insensibility here, that he had no consciousness whatever of his body or mind."

"During this interval two Brahmans, named Shashī and Mūldeva, from the country of Kanvrū, where they had studied the (occult) sciences, happened to pass by there. Mūldeva, seeing the Brahman's son lying, said, 'Shashī! how is it that he is lying in such utter unconsciousness?' He replied, 'A damsel has shot forth the arrows of her eyes from the bow of her eyebrows; hence he is lying insensible.' Mūldeva said, 'We ought to rouse him.' He replied, 'What need is there for you to rouse him?' He did not heed Shashī's words, but sprinkled water over him, and restored him to consciousness, and asked, 'What has been the matter with thee?' The Brahman said, 'One should relate his troubles to him who can remove them; for what is to be gained by relating your sorrows to him who, on hearing of them, is unable to

remove them?' He said, 'Well, tell me your troubles; I will remove them.' "

"On hearing this, he said, 'It was but now that the princess came here with her companions; and it was through seeing her that I have fallen into this state. Should I obtain possession of her, I will preserve my life; otherwise I will abandon life.' Then he replied, 'Come to my abode; I will exert myself to the utmost to obtain her; and, if I should not succeed, I will bestow great wealth upon thee.' Thereupon Manswī said, 'God has created many a jewel in the world; but the jewel, woman, surpasses all; and for her sake it is that man treasures up wealth. When I have lost the woman, what will I do with the wealth? Brute beasts are better off in the world than those who do not possess themselves of handsome wives. The fruit of merit is wealth, and the advantage of wealth is ease, and the consequence of ease is (the taking) a wife; now, what happiness can there be where there is no wife?' On hearing this, Mūldeva said, 'I will give thee whatsoever thou may'st ask for.' Then he said, 'O Brahman obtain that same maiden's hand for me.' Mūldeva thereupon said, 'So be it; come along with me; I will have that very maiden bestowed on thee.' "

"In short, ministering much comfort to him, he took him to his house; and when he reached there, he prepared two magic pills. One pill he gave to the

(young) Brahman, saying, 'When thou puttest this into thy mouth, thou wilt be turned into a girl of twelve years; and when thou takest it out of thy mouth, thou wilt become the self-same man thou wert before.' He said further, 'Put this into thy mouth.' On his putting it into his mouth, he became a girl of twelve years. And he, (Mūldeva) having put the other pill into his own mouth, became transformed into an old man of eighty years; and taking that young girl with him, he proceeded to the king."

"The king, seeing the Brahman, saluted him, gave him a seat, and another to the young girl also. Then the Brahman gave him his blessing in verse, saying, 'May he whose glory pervades the three worlds; and who, taking the form of a dwarf, deceived¹ King Bali; and who, taking monkeys with him, bridged the ocean;² and who, supporting the mountain (Go-

¹ Bali was a powerful king, who, by his austerities and devotion, overcame Indra in battle, and obtained power over heaven and earth. The gods became alarmed at this, and sought the aid of Vishnū, who visited the earth in the form of a dwarf, and went before Bali, who, according to custom, offered him presents. These the dwarf, affecting utter contempt for worldly wealth, declined, saying he merely wanted as much territory as could be comprised in three of his paces. Bali laughed, and granted his request; whereupon the dwarf increased his stature to prodigious dimensions, and, at one step, placed his foot on the heavens; at the next, on the earth; and, no room remaining for the third step, he placed his foot on Bali's head, and so, pressed him down to the region of *Nāga-loka*, beneath the earth, where he was kept in confinement, and bound with bonds made of twisted serpents.

² *Vide* note at page 93.

vardhan) on his hand,' protected the cowherds from the bolts of Indra,—may the same Vāsudeva protect you!' On hearing this, the king inquired, 'Whence has your highness come?' The Brahman; Mūldeva, replied, 'I have come from the other side of the Ganges, and my home is there; and I had gone to bring away my son's wife, (and) in my absence, a general flight from the village took place; and so I know not whither my wife and son have fled to. And now, with this girl with me, how shall I seek them? It is, therefore, advisable that I leave this (girl) with your majesty. Keep her with the greatest care until I return.' "

"On hearing these words of the Brahman's, the king began thinking to himself, 'How shall I take charge of a very beautiful young woman? And if I do not take her, this Brahman will curse me, (and) my dominion will be overthrown.' Having thought this over in his mind, the king said, 'Your highness! the command you have given me shall be obeyed.' On this, the king summoned his daughter, and said, 'Daughter! take this Brahman's daughter-in-law and keep her with you, with all care and attention; and, whether sleeping or waking, eating or drinking, or moving about, do not let her be away from you for a moment.' On hearing this, the princess took hold of

¹ This allusion to the exploits of Krishna the curious reader will find fully explained in the 26th chapter of the "Prem Sāgar."

the hand of the Brahman's daughter-in-law, and led her away to her own apartment. At night, the two slept in one bed, and began conversing with each other. In the course of conversation, the Brahman's daughter-in-law said, 'Tell me, O princess! to what trouble is it owing that you have become so worn and feeble?'"

"The princess said, 'I went one day in the spring, accompanied by my female friends, to stroll about in the garden, and there beheld a very handsome, Cupid-like Brahman, and our eyes met. He swooned away on one side, and I became unconscious on the other. Then my companions, seeing my predicament, brought me home. And I am totally ignorant of both his name and his abode. His image fills my eyes, and I have not the least desire for food and drink. It is through this trouble that my body has been reduced to the state you see.' On hearing this, the Brahman's daughter-in-law said, 'What wilt thou give me if I bring thy beloved and thee together?' The princess said, 'I will remain thy slave for ever.' Hearing this, he took the magic pill out of his mouth and became a man again; and she was abashed at beholding him. After that, the Brahman's son married her after the fashion of Gandharb marriages¹; and used constantly to convert himself thus into a man at night, and to

¹ Vide note at page 82.

remain a woman by day. At length, after six months, the princess became pregnant."

"They say that, one day, the king went with his whole family to a marriage festival at his minister's house. There the minister's son beheld that Brahman's son disguised as a woman, and fell in love as soon as he saw her (or him), and began to say to a friend of his, 'If this woman does not become mine, I will sacrifice my life.' In the interval, the king having partaken of the feast, returned to the palace with his family. But the condition of the minister's son became most painful through the anguish of separation from his beloved, and he gave up food and water. Seeing this state (of his), his friend went and informed the minister. And the minister, on hearing the story, went and said to the king, 'Your majesty! love for that Brahman's daughter-in-law has brought my son to a wretched state. He has given up eating and drinking. If you would kindly give the Brahman's daughter-in-law to me, his life would be saved.'"

"On hearing this, the king said angrily, 'Thou fool! It is not the nature of kings to do such a wrong. Hearken! Is it right to give away to another that which is given in trust, without the permission of the person making over the trust, that you mention this matter to me?' On hearing this, the minister returned home in despair. But perceiving the suffer-

ing of his son, he also gave up meat and drink. When three days passed without the minister's eating and drinking, then, indeed, all the officials combined, and said to the king, 'Your majesty! the minister's son is in a precarious state, and in the event of his dying, the minister, too, will not survive. And on the minister's dying, the affairs of the state will come to a stand-still. It is better that you consent to that which we state.' Hearing this, the king gave them permission to speak. Then one of them said, 'Your majesty! it is long since that old Brahman left this, and he has not returned; God knows whether he is dead or alive. It is therefore right that you give that Brahman's daughter-in-law to the minister's son, and so uphold your kingdom; and should he return, you can give him villages and wealth. Should he not be satisfied with this, get his son married (to another maiden) and let him depart.'"

"On hearing this, the king sent for the Brahman's daughter-in-law, and said, 'Go thou to the house of my minister's son.' She said, 'The virtue of a woman is destroyed by her being gifted with excessive beauty, and a Brahman's character is lost by his serving a king, and a cow is ruined by grazing in remote pastures, and wealth vanishes on meeting with abuse.' After saying so much, she added, 'If your majesty would give me to the minister's son, settle this matter with him, viz., that he will do whatever I tell him; then will I

go to his house.' The king said, 'Say! what should he do.' She replied, 'Your majesty! I am a Brahman woman, and he is a Kshatrī by caste; hence it is best that he first perform all the prescribed pilgrimages; after that I will cohabit with him.'"

"When he heard this speech, the king sent for the minister's son and said to him, 'Go thou, first, and visit all the places of pilgrimage; after that I will give the Brahman's girl to thee.' On hearing these words from the king, the minister's son said, 'Your majesty! let her go and take up her abode in my house, and then I will go on pilgrimage.' After hearing this, the king said to the Brahman's girl, 'If thou will first go and take up thy abode in his house, he will set out on pilgrimage.' Having no alternative, the Brahman's girl went at the king's bidding and took up her abode in his house. Then the minister's son said to his wife, 'Do you both live together in one place, on terms of the greatest affection and friendliness, and on no account quarrel and fight with each other, and never go to a strange house.'"

"Having given them these instructions, he, for his part, set out on a pilgrimage; and here (at home), his wife, whose name was Saubhāgya-sundarī, lying at night on one bed along with the Brahman's daughter-in-law, began conversing on various topics. After some time the wife of the minister's son spake as follows:—'O friend! at this moment I am consumed

with the flame of love; but how can my desire be attained?' The other said, 'If I accomplish thy desire, what wilt thou give me?' She replied, 'I will be thy humble and obedient slave for ever.' On this he took the magic pill out of his mouth and became transformed into a man. Thus he regularly transformed himself into a man by night, and into a woman by day. After that, indeed, great love existed between the two of them."

"In short, six months passed away in this manner, and the minister's son returned. On the one hand, the people hearing of his arrival, began to rejoice; and on the other, the Brahman's daughter-in-law, having taken the magic pill out of her mouth and transformed herself into a man, came out from the house by way of the wicket, and went off. Again, after some time, he came to the same Brahman, Mūldeva, who had given him the magic pill, and told him his whole story from beginning to end. Then Mūldeva, after hearing all the circumstances, took the magic pill from him and gave it to his companion, Shashī, and each of them put the pill (he had) into his mouth. One was transformed into an old man, and the other a young man of twenty. After this the two went to the king's.'"

"The king saluted them on the instant of seeing them, and gave them seats. And they, too, gave (the king) their blessings. After inquiring after their health and welfare, the king spake to Mūldeva, saying, 'Where have you been detained for so many days?

The Brahman said, 'Your majesty! I went to search for this son of mine, and having discovered him, I have brought him to you. If you will now give up his wife, I will take both daughter-in-law and son home.' Then the king related the whole story to the Brahman. The Brahman became very angry on hearing it, and said to the king, 'What proceeding is this, for thee to give my son's wife to another? Well! thou hast acted as thou pleasedst; but now receive my curse.' Thereupon the king said, 'O holy man! be not angry; I will do whatever you bid me.' The Brahman said, 'So be it; if, through fear of my curse, thou wilt do as I say, then give thy daughter in marriage to my son.' On hearing this, the king summoned an astrologer, and after having the auspicious conjunction and moment determined, gave his daughter in marriage to the Brahman's son. Then he took leave of the king and came to his own village, bringing the princess, together with her dowry, along with him."

"On hearing this intelligence, the Brahman Man-swi also came there, and commenced quarrelling with him, saying, 'Give me my wife.' The Brahman named Shashi said, 'I have married her before ten witnesses and brought her home; she is my wife.' He replied, 'She is with child by me; how can she become thy wife?' And they went on wrangling with each other. Mūldeva reasoned much with both of them, but neither heeded what he said."

After relating so much of the story, the sprite said,

"Say, king Bīr Vikramājī! whose wife was she?" The king replied, "She became the wife of the Brahman Shashi." Then the sprite said, "Pregnant by the other Brahman, how could she become the wife of this one?" The king said, "No one was aware of her being with child by that Brahman; whereas this one married her in the presence of ten arbitrators; therefore she became his wife. And the child, too, will have the right to perform his funeral obsequies." On hearing this, the sprite went and hung on to the same tree. Again did the king go, and, after binding the sprite, and placing him on his shoulder, carry him away.