

TALE XVI.

THE sprite said, "O King Bir Vikramājī! there is a city named Chandra-shekhar, and a merchant named Ratandatt was an inhabitant thereof. He had one only daughter, whose name was Unmādinī. When she attained to womanhood, her father went to the king of the place, and said, 'Your majesty! I have a daughter (lit. there is a girl in my house); if you desire to possess her, take her; otherwise I will give her to some one else.'"

"When the king heard this, he summoned two or three old servants, and said to them, 'Go and inspect the appearance of the merchant's daughter.' They came to the merchant's house at the monarch's bidding, and all became fascinated at the sight of the girl's beauty,—such beauty, as if a brilliant light was placed in a dark house; eyes like those of a gazelle; plaits of hair like female snakes; eyebrows like a bow; nose like a parrot's; a set of teeth (lit. the set of thirty-two) like a string of pearls; lips like the

kandūrī;¹ throat like a pigeon's; waist like the leopard's; hands and feet like a tender lotus; a face like the moon, a complexion of the colour of the *champā*, a gait like that of a goose, and a voice like the cuckoo's; at the sight of her beauty the female divinities of Indra's paradise would feel abashed."

"On beholding beauty of this kind, so abundantly rich in all graces, they decided among themselves, (saying), 'If such a woman enter the king's household, the king will become her slave, and will not give a thought to the affairs of government. Hence, it is better to tell the king that she is ill-favoured, (and) not worthy of him.' Having determined thus, they came thence to the king, and gave the following account:—'We have seen the girl; she is not worthy of you.' On hearing this, the king said to the merchant, 'I will not wed her.' Thereupon what does the merchant do on returning home, but give his daughter in marriage to one Balbadra, who was the commander-in-chief of the king's army. She took up her abode in his house."

"It is said that, one day, the royal cavalcade passed by that way; and she too was standing, fully attired, on her house-top, at the moment; (and) her eyes and those of the monarch chanced to meet. The king began to say to himself, 'Is this the daughter of a god, or a female divinity, or the daughter of a human being?' The short of it is, he was fascinated

¹ Vide note, page 74.

at the sight of her beauty, and returned thence to his palace in a state of extreme agitation. The warder, on beholding his countenance, said, 'Your majesty! what bodily pain are you suffering from?' The monarch replied, 'While coming along the road to-day I saw a beautiful woman on a house-top. I know not whether she is a houri, or a fairy, or a human being; but her beauty drove my mind distracted all at once; and hence (it is that) I am agitated.' "

"On hearing this, the door-keeper said, 'Your majesty! she is the daughter of that same merchant (who offered his daughter to you). Balbhadra, your majesty's commander-in-chief, has brought her home as his wife.' The king said, 'Those whom I sent to see her appearance have deceived me.' After saying this, the king ordered the mace-bearer to bring those persons before him without delay. On receiving this order from the king, the mace-bearer went and brought them. In short, when they came before the king, his majesty said, 'The errand on which I sent you, and that which was the desire of my heart—these things you failed to accomplish; on the contrary, you fabricated a false story, and gave it to me as an answer. Now, to-day, I have seen her with my own eyes. She is so beautiful a woman, rich in all distinguishing qualities, that it would be difficult to meet with her equal in these times.' "

"On hearing this, they said, 'What your majesty

says is true; but graciously listen to the object we had in view in representing her to your majesty as ill-favoured. We decided among ourselves that, if so beautiful a woman enter the royal household, your majesty would become her slave on the instant of beholding her, and would neglect all the affairs of the State, and so the kingdom would go to ruin. It was in consequence of this apprehension that we invented such a story, and laid it before you.' "

"When he heard this, the king *said* to them, 'You speak the truth;' but he experienced the greatest uneasiness thinking of her. Now, the king's distress of mind was known to everyone, when, at the moment, Balbhadra, too, arrived, and putting his hands together (in humble supplication), stood before the king, and said, 'O lord of the earth! I am your servant, she is your hand-maid, and you to suffer so much pain on her account! Be pleased, therefore, to give the order that she may be brought before you.' On hearing these words, the king said very angrily, 'It is a grievous wrong to approach another's wife! What is this thou hast said to me? What! am I a lawless wretch, that I should commit an infamous deed! The wife of another is as a mother, and the wealth of another is on a par with mud. Hear me, brother! As a man regards his own heart, so should he regard the hearts of others.' Balbhadra spoke again, saying, 'She is my servant. When I give her

to your majesty, how can she any longer be the wife of another?' The king replied, 'I will not commit an act whereby reproach would attach to me in the world.' The commander-in-chief said again, 'Your majesty! I will turn her out of the house, and place her somewhere else, and after making a prostitute of her, will bring her to you.' Thereupon the monarch said, 'If thou makest a harlot of a virtuous woman I will punish thee severely.' "

"After saying this, the king pined at the recollection of her, and, in the course of ten days, died. Then the commander-in-chief, Balbhadra, went and asked his spiritual teacher, 'My master has died for the sake of Unmādinī; what is it right for me to do now? Favour me with your commands in this matter.' He said, 'It is the duty of a servant to give up his life also after his master's.' This servant gladly went to the place where they had conveyed the king for cremation. During the time in which the king's funeral pile was got ready, he, too, had quitted himself of his ablutions and devotions; and when they lighted the pile, he too drew near the pile, and raising his joined hands to the sun, began to say, 'O Sun-deity! in thought, word and deed, I solicit the gratification of this desire, viz., that at every successive birth I may meet with this same master, and (for this) hymn your praises.' Having uttered this, he bowed in adoration, and leaped into the fire."

"When Unmādinī received this intelligence, she went to her spiritual teacher, and telling him all, asked, saying, 'Your highness! what is the duty of a wife?' He replied, 'It is by doing her duty to him to whom her father and mother have given her that she is termed a woman of good family; and it is thus written in the book of law, viz.—The woman who in her husband's lifetime practises austerities and fasting, shortens the life of her husband, and is finally cast into hell. But the best thing is this, that a woman by doing her duty to her husband, no matter how wanting he may be, secures her own salvation. Moreover, the woman who entertains the desire to sacrifice herself for her husband in the burning-ground, most undoubtedly derives as much benefit from as many steps as she takes towards this as would be derived from an equal number of horse-sacrifices.¹ Further, there is no virtue equal to that of a woman's sacrificing herself for her husband on the funeral pile.' On hearing this, she made her salutation, and returned home; and after bathing, and performing her devotions, and giving large gifts to Brahmans, went to the funeral pile, and going once round to the right in adoration, said, 'O Lord! I am Thy servant in each succeeding birth.' Having said this, she, too, went and seated herself in the fire, and was consumed."

¹ The *ashwamedha*, or horse-sacrifice, is one performed by powerful kings alone, as it involves a vast expense. It is regarded as of the highest efficacy, and as far excelling all ordinary sacrifices.

After relating so much of the story, the sprite said, "O king! whose virtue was greatest of these three?" King Bīr Vikramājīṭ replied, "The king's." The sprite said, "How so?" The king replied, "He left alone the wife given to him by the commander-in-chief, while he sacrificed his life on her account, and yet preserved his virtue. It behoves a servant to lay down his life for his master; and it is right for a wife to sacrifice herself for her lord. Therefore the virtue of the king was greatest." Having heard these words, the sprite went and hung on to that same tree. The king, too, followed him, and again bound him, and placed him on his shoulder, and carried him away.

TALE XVII.

THE sprite said, "Your majesty! there was a king of Ujjain, named Mahāsain; and an inhabitant of that place was a Brahman, Devasharmā, whose son's name was Guṇākar. He (the son) turned out a great gambler; so much so that he lost at play all the wealth the Brahman possessed. Thereupon all the members of the family turned Guṇākar out of house and home. And he could not help himself in any way; (so) having no other resource, he took his departure from the place, and in several days' time came to a certain city. What does he see there but a devotee sitting over a fire, and inhaling smoke by way of penance. After saluting him, he, too, sat down there. The devotee asked him, 'Wilt thou eat anything?' He replied, 'Your highness! of course I will eat, if you give me (something).' The devotee filled a human skull with food and brought it to him. On seeing it he said, 'I'll not eat food out of this skull.'"

"When he did not partake of the food, the ascetic