

such courage will (be sure to) succeed in his undertakings.

Then the sprite<sup>1</sup> said, "Who art thou? and whither art thou taking me?" The king replied, "I am king Vikram, and am taking thee off to a devotee." He rejoined, "I will go on one condition,—if thou utterest a word on the way, I will come straight back." The king agreed to his condition and went off with him. Then the sprite said, "O king! those who are learned, discerning, and wise—*their* days are passed in the delight of song and the shāstras, while the days of the unwise and foolish are spent in dissipation and sleep. Hence, it is best that this long road should be beguiled by profitable converse: do you attend, O king! to the story I relate."

<sup>1</sup> *Betal* or *baitāl*, is a sprite haunting cemeteries (or, rather, places where bodies are burned,) and animating dead bodies.

## TALE I.

"THERE was a king of Banāras, named Pratāpmukut; and Bajra-mukut was the name of his son, whose queen's name was Mahādevī. One day the prince, accompanied by his minister's son, went to the chase, and advanced far into a jungle, in the midst of which he beheld a beautiful tank, on the margin of which wild geese, brāhmanī ducks, male and female, cranes and water-fowl were, one and all, disporting; on all four sides *ghāts* of solid masonry were constructed: within the tank, the lotus was in full bloom: on the sides were planted trees of different kinds, under the dense shade of which the breezes came cool and refreshing, while birds were warbling on the boughs; and in the forest bloomed flowers of varied hues, on which whole swarms of bees were buzzing;—(such was the scene) when they arrived by the margin of that tank, and washed their hands and faces, and re-ascended."

"On that spot was a temple sacred to Mahādeva. Fastening their horses, and entering the temple, they paid adoration to Mahādeva, and came out. While

they were engaged in adoration, the daughter of a certain king, accompanied by a host of attendants, came to another margin of the tank to bathe; and, having finished her ablutions, meditations and prayers, she, with her own maidens, began to walk about in the shade of the trees. On this side the minister's son was seated, and the king's son was walking about, when, suddenly, his eyes, and the eyes of the king's daughter, met. As soon as he beheld her beauty, the king's son was fascinated, and began saying to himself, 'You wretch, Cupid! why do you molest me?' And when the princess beheld the prince, she took in her hand the lotus-flower which she had fixed on her head after her devotions, placed it to her ear, bit it with her teeth, put it under her foot, then took it up and pressed it to her bosom, and, taking her maidens with her, mounted (her chariot) and departed home."

"And the prince, sinking into the depths of despair, and overwhelmed with grief on account of her absence, came to the minister's son, and with a feeling of shame laid before him the actual state of affairs, saying, 'O friend! I have seen a most beautiful damsel; (but) I know neither her name nor her abode: should I not possess her, I will give up my life: this I am firmly resolved upon in my mind.' Hearing these circumstances, the minister's son caused him to mount, and brought him home, it is true; but the king's son was so restless from grief at separation, that he entirely

abandoned writing, reading, eating, drinking, sleeping, the business of government—everything. He used to be constantly sketching her portrait and gazing at it and weeping; not speaking himself, nor listening to what others said."

"When the minister's son saw this state of his, the result of separation from his flame, he said to him, 'Whosoever treads the path of love doth not survive; or if he survive, he suffers great sorrow.<sup>1</sup> On this account the wise avoid treading this path.' The king's son, on hearing his words, replied, 'I, in sooth, have entered upon this path, be there joy in it or be there pain.' When he heard so determined a speech from him, he (the minister's son) said, 'Great king! at the time of leaving did she say anything to you, or you to her?' Upon this he made answer, saying, 'I said nothing, nor did I hear anything from her.' Then the minister's son said, 'It will be very difficult to find her.' He said, 'If she be secured, my life will be preserved; otherwise, it is lost.'"

"He enquired again, 'Did she make no signs even?' The prince said, 'These are the gestures she made,—suddenly seeing me, she took the lotus-flower from her head, put it to her ear, bit it with her teeth, placed it under her foot, and pressed it to her bosom.' On hearing this, the minister's son said, 'I have compre-

<sup>1</sup> *Lit.*—Whosoever has placed his step in the path of love has not survived after it; or if he has survived, then he has experienced great affliction.

hended her signs, and discovered her name, habitation, and all about her.' He (the prince) replied, 'Explain to me whatever you have discovered.' He began to say, 'Attend, O king! Her having taken the lotus-flower from her head and put it to her ear, is equivalent to her having informed you that she is an inhabitant of the Karnāṭak (Carnatic); and in biting it with her teeth, she intimated that she is the daughter of king Danta-vāṭ; and by pressing it under her foot, she declared that her name is Padmāvati; and in again taking it up and pressing it to her bosom, she informed you that you dwell in her heart.' When the prince heard these words, he said to him, 'It is advisable that you take me to the city in which she dwells.' No sooner had he said this than both dressed themselves, girt on their arms, and taking some jewels with them, mounted their horses and took the road to that quarter."

"Having reached the Karnāṭak after several days, and having arrived below the palaces of the king in their stroll through the city, what do they see there but an old woman sitting at her door and plying her cotton-wheel. The two, dismounting from their horses, approached her, and began to say, 'Mother! we are travelling merchants, our goods are following us; we have come on ahead to seek a lodging; if you will give us a place, we will abide.' On looking at their faces and hearing their words, the old woman took compassion on them and said, 'This house is yours;

remain here as long as you please.' In short, they took possession of the house on hearing this; and after some delay the old woman came and kindly sat with them, and began chatting with them. On this, the minister's son enquired of her, 'What family and relations have you got? and how do you subsist?' The old woman said, 'My son is very comfortably provided for in the king's service, and your humble servant is the wet-nurse of Padmāvati, the king's daughter; in consequence of old age having overtaken me I remain at home, but the king provides for my maintenance. Once a day, however, I go regularly to see that girl; it is on my return from thence, in my home, alone, that I give vent to my woe.' "

"Hearing these words, the prince rejoiced at heart, and said to the old woman, 'When you are starting to-morrow, please carry a message from me too.' She replied, 'Son! what need to defer it till to-morrow? I will this moment convey any message of yours that you communicate to me.' Then he said, 'Do you go and tell her this,—The prince whom you saw on the margin of the tank on the fifth day of the light half of the month Jeth has arrived here.' "

"On hearing these words the old woman took her stick and went to the palace. When she got there she found the princess sitting alone. When she appeared before her, she (the princess) saluted her.

The old woman gave her her blessing, and said, 'Daughter! I tended you in your infancy, and suckled you. God has now caused you to grow up: what my heart now desires is, that I should see you happy in your prime, then should I, too, receive comfort.' Addressing her in such affectionate words as these, she proceeded to say, 'The prince whose heart you took captive on the fifth day of the light half of Jeth, by the side of the tank, has alighted at my house, (and) has sent you this message, for you to perform the promise you made him, now that he has arrived. And I tell you, for my part, that that prince is worthy of you, and is as excellent in disposition and mental qualities as you are beautiful.' "

"On hearing these words she became angry, and applying sandal to her hands, and slapping the face of the old woman, began to say, 'Wretch! get out of my house!' She rose annoyed, and went, in that very condition, straight to the prince, and related all that had happened to her. The prince was astounded at these words. Then the minister's son spoke, saying, 'Great king! feel no anxiety; this matter has not come within your comprehension.' Hereupon he said, 'True; do you then explain it, that my mind may obtain rest.' He said, 'In smearing sandal on the ten fingers, and striking the (woman on the) face, she intimated, that when the ten nights of moonlight shall come to an end, she will meet you in the dark.' "

"To be brief, after ten days the old woman again went and announced him; then she tinged three of her fingers with saffron, and struck them on her cheek, saying, 'Get out of my house!' After all, the old woman moved from thence in despair, and came and related to the prince all that had occurred. He was engulfed in an ocean of sorrow as soon as he heard it. Seeing this state of his, the minister's son said again, 'Be not alarmed, the purport of this matter is something else.' He replied, 'My heart is disquieted; tell me quickly.' Then he said, 'She is in the state which women are in every month, and hence has stipulated for three days more; on the fourth day she will send for you.' In short, when the three days elapsed, the old woman made enquiries after her health on the part of the prince. Then she brought the old woman angrily to the western wicket, and turned her out. Again the old woman came and informed the prince of this event: he became cast-down at hearing it. On this the minister's son said, 'The explanation of the affair is, that she has invited you to-night by way of that wicket.' He was pleased beyond measure at hearing this. To be brief, when the hour arrived, they took out brown suits of clothes, arranged them, fastened on their turbands, dressed themselves, placed their weapons in order about them, and were ready; by this time midnight had passed. At that time an

universal stillness prevailed, when they, too, pursued their way in unbroken silence."

"When they arrived near the wicket, the minister's son remained standing without, and he (the prince) entered the wicket. What does he perceive, but the princess, too, standing there expecting him! Thus their eyes met. Then the princess laughed, and, closing the wicket, took the prince with her into the festive chamber. Arrived there, the prince beheld censers filled with perfume alight in different parts of the room, and maidens dressed in garments of various colours standing respectfully, with hands joined, each according to her station; on one side a couch of flowers spread; atr-holders, pān-boxes, rose-water bottles, trays and four-partitioned boxes arranged in order; on another side, compound essences, prepared sandal-wood, mixed perfumes, musk, and saffron filled in metal cups; here, coloured boxes of exquisite confections laid out; there, sweetmeats of various kinds placed in order; all the doors and walls adorned with pictures and paintings, and holding such faces, that the beholder would be enchanted at the very sight of each single one. In short, everything that could contribute to pleasure and enjoyment was got together. The whole scene was one of an extraordinary character, of which no adequate description can be given."

"Such was the apartment to which the princess Padmāvati took the prince and gave him a seat, and

having his feet washed, and applying sandal to his body, and placing a garland of flowers round his neck, and sprinkling rose-water over him, began fanning him with her own hands. Upon this the prince said, 'At the mere sight of you I have become refreshed; why do you take so much trouble? These delicate hands are not fit to handle a fan; give me the fan; you be seated.' Padmāvati replied, 'Great king! you have been at great trouble to come here for my sake, it behoves me to wait upon you.' Then a maiden took the fan from the princess's hand, and said, 'This is my business; I will attend on you, and do you both enjoy yourselves.' They began eating betel-leaf together, and engaging in familiar conversation, when, by this time, it became morning. The princess concealed him; (and) when night came on, they again engaged in amorous pleasures. Thus several days passed away. Whenever the prince showed a wish to depart the princess would not permit him. A month passed thus; then the prince became much disturbed, and very anxious."

"Once it happened that he was sitting alone by night and thinking thus to himself, 'Country, throne, family,—everything had already been separated from me; but such a friend as mine, by whose means I found all this happiness, even him have I not met for a whole month! What will he be saying in his heart? and how do I know what may be happening to him?' He was sitting occupied with these anxious

thoughts when, in the meanwhile, the princess too arrived, and seeing his predicament, began to inquire, 'Great king! what grief possesses you that you are sitting so dispirited here? Tell me.' Then he said, 'I have a very dear friend, the son of the minister; for a whole month I have received no accounts of him: he is such a clever, learned friend, that through *his* talents (it was that) I obtained thee, and *he* (it was who) explained all thy secrets.' The princess said, 'Great king! your soul is really there; what happiness can you enjoy here? Hence, this is best,—I will prepare confections and sweetmeats, and all kinds of meats, and have them sent; do you, too, go there and feast and comfort him well, and return with your mind at ease.' "

"On hearing this the prince rose up and came forth; and the princess had different kinds of sweetmeats, with poison mixed, cooked and sent. The prince had but just gone and sat beside the minister's son when the sweetmeats arrived. The minister's son enquired, 'Great king! how did these sweetmeats come here?' The prince replied, 'I was sitting there anxious concerning you, when the princess came, and looking at me, asked, 'Why do you sit cast-down? Explain the reason of it.' On this I gave her a full account of your skill in reading secrets.'<sup>1</sup> On hearing this ac-

<sup>1</sup> In thus translating, I take *bhed-chaturāi* as a compound: other translators render it, "the secrets of your cleverness," which seems to me to be grammatically inadmissible, and to lose the sense.

count, she gave me permission to come to you, and had these sent for you; if you will partake of them, my heart, too, will be rejoiced.' Then the minister's son said, 'You have brought poison for me; it is well, indeed, that *you* did not eat of it. Sire! listen to a word from me,—a woman has no love for her lover's friend: you did not act wisely in mentioning my name there.' On hearing this the prince said, 'You talk of such a thing as no one would ever do: if man have no fear of man, it is to be presumed he fears God at least.' "

"With these words he took a round sweetmeat from among them and threw it to a dog. As soon as the dog ate it he died convulsed. Seeing this turn of affairs, the prince became incensed, and began to say, 'It is unbecoming to associate with so false a woman; up to this hour her love has found place in my heart; now, however, it is all over.'<sup>1</sup> On hearing this the minister's son said, 'Your majesty! what has happened, has happened (*i.e.*, let bygones be bygones); you should now act in such a manner that you may be able to get her away to your home.' The prince said, 'Brother! this, too, can be accomplished by you alone.' The minister's son said, 'To-day do this

<sup>1</sup> This translation may seem rather free, but it is not wide of the sense, which is, "I know well that I have no love for her now." This peculiarly idiomatic use of the word *ma'lūm* occurs in the *Bagh-o-bahār*, *Arāyishi Mahfil*, and many other Urdu works, and has ever proved a stumbling-block to translators.

one thing,—go again to Padmāvati, and do just what I tell you,—first go and display much regard and affection for her; (and) when she falls asleep, take off her jewels, and strike her on the left thigh with this trident, and instantly come away from thence.’”

“Having received these instructions, the prince went to Padmāvati at night, and after much affectionate conversation, they both lay down together to sleep; but he was secretly watching his opportunity. To be brief, when the princess fell asleep, he took off all her ornaments, struck her on the left thigh with the trident, and came to his own house. He recounted all the occurrences to the minister’s son, and laid the jewels before him. He then took up the jewels, took the prince with him, and, assuming the guise of a devotee, went and sat in a place for burning bodies. He himself took the part of a spiritual teacher, and making him (the prince) his disciple, said to him, ‘You go into the market and sell these jewels; if anyone should seize you while doing this, bring him to me.’”

“Receiving his instructions, the prince took the jewels with him to the city, and showed them to a goldsmith in close proximity to the king’s palace-gate. As soon as he saw them he recognised them, and said, ‘These are the princess’s jewels; tell me truly, where did you get them?’ He was saying this to him when ten or twenty more men gathered round. To be brief, the

koṭwāl, hearing the news, sent men and had the prince, together with the jewels and the goldsmith, seized and brought before him, and inspecting the jewels, asked him to state truly where he had got them. When he said, ‘My spiritual preceptor has given them to me to sell, but I know not whence he got them,’—then the koṭwāl had the preceptor also apprehended and brought before him, and taking them both, together with the jewels, into the presence of the king, related all the circumstances.”

“On hearing the narrative the king addressed the devotee, saying, ‘Master! whence did you obtain these jewels?’ The devotee said, ‘Your majesty! on the fourteenth night of the dark lunar fortnight I visited a burning-ground to perfect some spells for a witch: when the witch came, I took off her jewels and apparel, and made the impression of a trident on her left thigh; in this way these ornaments came into my possession.’ On hearing this statement of the devotee’s, the king went into his private apartments, and the devotee to his seat<sup>1</sup> (in the burning-ground). The king said to the queen, ‘Just see if there is a mark on Padmāvati’s left thigh or not, and (if so) what sort of a mark there is.’ The queen having gone and looked, found the mark of a trident. She returned

<sup>1</sup> The *āsan* is, generally, the skin of a deer, or leopard, or tiger, which religious mendicants carry with them to sit upon. The hide of a black antelope is commonly preferred. Some of the gods are fabled to use the lotus-flower for the purpose.

and said to the king, 'Your majesty! there are three parallel marks; indeed, it appears as if some one had struck her with a trident.' "

"On hearing this account, the king came out and sent for the kotwāl, and told him to go and bring the devotee. The kotwāl set off to bring the devotee on the instant of receiving the order; and the king began reflecting thus,—'The affairs of one's household, and the intentions of one's heart, and any loss which has befallen one—these it is not right to disclose to anyone;' when, in the interval, the kotwāl brought the devotee into the presence. Then the king took the devotee aside and questioned him, saying, 'Spiritual guide! what punishment is laid down in the scriptures for a woman?' On this the devotee said, 'Your majesty! if a Brahman, a cow, a wife, a child, or any one dependent on us, be guilty of a disgraceful act, it is prescribed that such should be banished from the country.' "

"On hearing this the king had Padmāvati conveyed away in a litter and left in a jungle. Thereupon both the prince and the minister's son started from their lodging on horseback, went to that jungle, took the Princess Padmāvati with them, and set out for their own country. After some days each reached his father's house. The greatest joy took possession of all, high and low; and these (*i. e.*, the prince and the princess,) entered upon a life of mutual happiness."

After relating so much of the tale the sprite asked King Vikramājī, "To which of those four does guilt attach? If you do not decide this point, you will be cast into hell." King Vikram said, "The guilt attaches to the king." The sprite replied, "How does the sin fall on the king?" Vikram answered him thus, "The minister's son simply did his duty to his master; and the kotwāl obeyed the king's command; and the princess attained her object; hence, the guilt falls on the king for having inconsiderately expelled her from the country."

On hearing these words from the king's mouth, the sprite went and suspended himself on that same tree.