

TALE V.

THE sprite said, "O king! there is a city named Ujjain, of which Mahābal was king. Now, he had an envoy named Haridās. The name of that envoy's daughter was Mahādevī. She was extremely beautiful. When she became marriageable, her father thought that he ought to seek a husband for her, and give her in marriage. In short, the girl one day said to her father, 'Father! give me in marriage to some one who is possessed of all accomplishments. On this, he said, 'I will give thee to one who is acquainted with all science.'"

"One day subsequent to this, the king summoned Haridās, and said, 'There is in the south a king named Harichand; go and ask after his health and welfare for me, and bring me news thereof.' On receiving the king's command he took leave, and arriving at that king's after some days, delivered to him the whole message of his royal master, and took up his permanent abode near that monarch."

"To be brief, it happened one day that the king

questioned him, saying, 'Haridās! has the Iron Age (*i. e.*, the fourth age of the world, or the age of vice) begun yet or not?' On this he put his hands together and said, 'Your majesty! we are already in the Iron Age (*lit.* the Iron Age is present); for falsehood is rife in the world, and truth has decreased; people utter soft words to one's face, while they harbour deceit in their hearts; virtue has vanished; vice has increased; the earth has begun to yield less fruit; kings have begun levying contributions by violence; Brahmans have become covetous; women have abandoned modesty; the son obeys not the father's command; brother trusts not brother; friendship has departed from amongst friends; faith is no longer found in masters, and servants have cast aside the duty they owe to masters, and every description of impropriety meets the eye.'"

"When he had said all this to the king, his majesty arose and went into the private apartments, and he (the envoy) came and sat down in his own place. In the meantime a Brahman's son came to him and said, 'I have come to solicit something of you.' On hearing this, he said, 'What request have you to make? Mention it.' He replied, 'Give me your daughter in marriage.' Haridās said, 'I will give her to him in whom all accomplishments exist.' Hearing this, he rejoined, 'I am acquainted with all the sciences.' Then said the envoy, 'Show me some-

thing of thy knowledge; I shall thus be able to judge whether thou art versed in science.' Hereupon the Brahman's son said, 'I have made a car which has this marvellous property, that it will convey you in a moment to any place you may wish to go to.' Then Haridās replied, 'Bring the car to me in the morning.'

"In fine, he brought the car to Haridās early in the morning. Then the two mounted the car, and arrived in the City of Ujjain. Here, however, it so happened that, previous to his arrival, another Brahman's son had come, and said to his eldest son, 'Give me your sister in marriage;' and he also had replied, saying, 'I will give her to one who is learned in all the sciences;' and that Brahman's son, too, had said, 'I am acquainted with all knowledge and science.' On hearing this, he had said, 'To you will I give her.' Another Brahman's son had said to the girl's mother, 'Give me your daughter.' She, too, had given him the same answer; viz., 'I will give my girl to him who is acquainted with all science.' That Brahman's son also had replied, 'I am acquainted with the whole body of science contained in the *Shāstras*, and can shoot an arrow which will hit an object which is merely heard, and not seen.' On hearing this, she, too, had said, 'I consent, and will give her to thee.'"

"In short, all the three suitors had come and met together in this way. Haridās began to think to himself, 'One girl and three suitors! to whom shall

I give her, and to whom not?' He was troubled with this thought, when a demon came at night and carried off the girl to the summit of a mountain in the Vindhya range. It is said that too much of anything is not good. Sītā was exceedingly beautiful, and Rāvan carried her off; King Balī gave gifts largely,—he became indigent; Rāvan utterly ruined his family by his excessive pride."

"In brief, when morn arrived, and none of the household found the girl, they began to fancy all sorts of things; and the three suitors, too, on hearing of the matter, came there. One of them was a wise man,—him Haridās questioned, saying, 'O wise man! tell me whither the girl has gone?' He considered for a moment or so, and said, 'A demon has carried off your daughter, and lodged her on a mountain.' On this, the second said, 'I will kill the demon and bring her back.' Then, again, the third said, 'Mount my car and bring her back.' On the instant of hearing this, he mounted the car, reached the place, slew the demon, and forthwith brought her back. And then they began quarrelling with one another. Thereupon the father pondered over the matter in his mind, and said, 'All of them have conferred obligations on me, to whom shall I give her, and to whom not?'"

Having related so much of the story, the sprite said, "Now, king Vikram! whose wife, out of the three, did the maiden become?" He replied, "She

became the wife of him who slew the demon and brought her back." The sprite said, "The good qualities of all were on a par,—how came she to become his wife?" The king replied, "The other two simply conferred favours, for which they were recompensed; but this one fought with and slew him (the demon) and brought her away, hence she became his wife." On hearing this the sprite went again to the same tree, and suspended himself on it, and the king, too, went immediately, bound the sprite, placed him on his shoulder, and carried him off as before.

TALE VI.

AGAIN the sprite said, "O king! there is a city named Dharmpur, of which Dharmshil was king; and his minister's name was Andhak. He said one day to the king, 'Your majesty! build a temple, and place an image of Devī therein, and pay constant adoration thereto, for this is said in the *Shāstra* to possess great merit.' Thereupon the king had a temple built and (the image of) Devī placed in it, and began offering adoration after the manner prescribed by the Vedas; and he would not drink water without having worshipped."

"When a considerable time had passed thus, the minister said one day, 'Great king! the saying is well known,—The house of a sonless man is empty, a fool's mind is empty, and everything pertaining to an indigent person is empty.' On hearing these words, the king went to the temple of Devī, and joining his hands in supplication, began to extol her, saying, 'O Devī! Brahmā, Vishnū, Rudra, Indra await thy bidding the livelong day; and thou it was