ŚAKOONTALÁ

—

BY

KÁLIDÁSA

[*Translation by Sir Monier Monier-Williams*]

INTRODUCTION

THE drama is always the latest development of a national poetry—for the origin of poetry is in the religious rite, where the hymn or the ode is used to celebrate the glories of some divinity, or some hero who has been received into the circle of the gods. This at least is the case in Sanscrit as in Greek literature, where the hymn and ballad precede the epic. The epic poem becomes the stable form of poetry during the middle period in the history of literature, both in India and Greece. The union of the lyric and the epic produces the drama. The speeches uttered by the heroes in such poems as the " Iliad " are put into the mouths of real personages who appear in sight of the audience and represent with fitting gestures and costumes the characters of the story. The dialogue is interspersed with songs or odes, which reach their perfection in the choruses of Sophocles.

The drama is undoubtedly the most intellectual, as it is the most artificial, form of poetry. The construction of the plot, and the arrangement of the action, give room for the most thoughful and deliberate display of genius. In this respect the Greek drama stands forth as most philosophically perfect. The drama, moreover, has always been by far the most popular form of poetry; because it aids, as much as possible, the imagination of the auditor, and for distinctness and clearness of impression stands preëminent above both the epic narrative and the emotional description of the lyric.

The drama in India appears to have been a perfectly indigenous creation, although it was of very late development, and could not have appeared even so early as the Alexandrian pastorals which marked the last phase of Greek poetry. When it did appear, it never took the perfect form of the drama at Athens. It certainly borrowed as little from Greece as it did from China or Japan, and the Persians and Arabians do not appear to have produced any dramatic masterpieces.

The greatest of dramatists in the Sanscrit language is undoubtedly Kálidása, whose date is placed, by different scholars, anywhere from the first to the fifth century of our era. His masterpiece, and indeed the masterpiece of the Indian drama, is the "Śakoontalá," which has all the graces as well as most of the faults of Oriental poetry. There can be no doubt that to most Europeans the charm of it lies in the exquisite description of natural scenery and of that atmosphere of piety and religious calm—almost mediæval in its austere beauty and serenity—which invests the hermit life of India. The abode of the ascetics is depicted with a pathetic grace that we only find paralleled in the "Admetus" of Euripides. But at the same time the construction of the drama is more like such a play as Milton's "Comus," than the closely-knit, symmetrical, and inevitable progress of such a work of consummate skill as the "King Œdipus" of Sophocles. Emotion, and generally the emotion of love, is the motive in the "Śakoontalá" of Kálidása, and different phases of feeling, rather than the struggles of energetic action, lead on to the *dénouement* of the play. The introduction of supernatural agencies controlling the life of the personages, leaves very little room for the development and description of human character. As the fate of the hero is dependent altogether upon the caprice of superhuman powers, the moral elements of a drama are but faintly discernible. Thus the central action of Śakoontalá hinges on the fact that the heroine, absorbed in thoughts of love, neglects to welcome with due respect the great saint Durvasas—certainly a trifling and venial fault—but he is represented as blighting her with a curse which results in all the unhappiness of the drama, and which is only ended at last by the intervention of a more powerful being. By this principle of construction the characters are reduced to mere shadow creations: beautiful as arabesques, delicate as a piece of ivory carving, tinted like the flat profiles of an Oriental fan or the pattern of a porcelain vase, but deficient in robustness and vigorous coloring. Humanity is absolutely dwarfed and its powers rendered inoperative by the crowd of supernatural creatures that control its destiny. Even in the "Tempest" of Shakespeare, in which the supernatural plays a greater part than in any other English drama, the strength and nobility of human character are allowed full play—and man in his fortitude, in his intellect and will, even more than

in his emotions, keeps full possession of the stage, and imparts a reality to every scene which makes the wildest flight of fancy bear a real relation to the common experiences of human life.

The " Śakoontalá " is divided into seven acts, and is a mixture of prose and verse;—each character rising in the intensity of emotional utterance into bursts of lyric poetry. The first act introduces the King of India, Dushyanta, armed with bow and arrows, in a chariot with his driver. They are passing through a forest in pursuit of a black antelope, which they fail to overtake before the voice of some hermit forbids them to slay the creature as it belongs to the hermitage. The king piously desists and reaches the hermitage of the great saint Kanwa, who has left his companions in charge of his foster-daughter, Śakoontalá, while he is bound on a pilgrimage. Following these hermits the king finds himself within the precincts of a sacred grove, where rice is strewn on the ground to feed the parrots that nest in the hollow trunks, and where the unterrified antelopes do not start at the human voice. The king stops his chariot and alights, so as not to disturb the dwellers in the holy wood. He feels a sudden throb in his right arm, which augurs happy love, and sees hermit maidens approaching to sprinkle the young shrubs, with watering-pots suited to their strength. The forms of these hermit maidens eclipse those found in queenly halls, as the luxuriance of forest vines excels the trim vineyards of cultivation. Amongst these maidens the king, concealed by the trees, observes Śakoontalá, dressed in the bark garment of a hermit—like a blooming bud enclosed within a sheath of yellow leaves. When she stands by the *kešara*-tree, the king is impressed by her beauty, and regrets that she is, if of a purely Bráhmanic origin, forbidden to marry one of the warrior class, even though he be a king. A very pretty description is given of the pursuit of Śakoontalá by a bee which her sprinkling has startled from a jasmine flower. From this bee she is rescued by the king, and is dismayed to find that the sight of the stranger affects her with an emotion unsuited to the holy grove. She hurries off with her two companions, but as she goes she declares that a prickly *kusa*-grass has stung her foot; a *kuruvaka*-bush has caught her garment, and while her companions disentangle it, she takes a long look at the king, who confesses that he cannot turn his mind from Śakoontalá. This is the opening episode of their love.

The second act introduces the king's jester, a Bráhman on confidential terms with his master, who, while Dushyanta is thinking of love, is longing to get back to the city. He is tired of the hot jungle, the nauseating water of bitter mountain streams, the racket of fowlers at early dawn, and the eternal galloping, by which his joints are bruised. The king is equally tired of hunting, and confesses that he cannot bend his bow against those fawns which dwell near Śakoontalá's abode, and have taught their tender glance to her. He calls back the beaters sent out to surround the forest, takes off his hunting-suit, and talks to the jester about the charms of Śakoontalá—whom the Creator, he says, has formed by gathering in his mind all lovely shapes, so as to make a peerless woman-gem. He recalls the glance which she shot at him as she cried, "a *kusha*-grass has stung my foot." Meanwhile two hermits approach him with the news that the demons have taken advantage of Kanwa's absence to disturb the sacrifices. They request him to take up his abode in the grove for a few days, in order to vanquish the enemies. A messenger arrives to tell him that his mother, in four days, will be offering a solemn sacrifice for her son's welfare, and invites his presence at the rite. But he cannot leave Śakoontalá, and sends the jester Máthavya in his stead, telling him to say nothing about his love for Śakoontalá.

In the third act the love of the king and the hermit girl reaches its climax. The king is found walking in the hermitage, invoking the God of Love, whose shafts are flowers, though the flowery darts are hard as steel. "Mighty God of Love, hast Thou no pity on me?" What better relief, he asks, than the sight of my beloved? He traces Śakoontalá, by the broken tubes which bore the blossoms she had culled, to the arbor, enclosed by the plantation of canes, and shaded by vines, at whose entrance he observes in the sand the track of recent footsteps. Peering through the branches, he perceives her reclining on a stone seat strewn with flowers. Her two companions are with her, and she is sick unto death. The king notices that her cheeks are wasted, her breasts less swelling, her slender waist more slender, her roseate hue has grown pale, and she seems like some poor *madhave* creeper touched by winds that have scorched its leaves. Her companions anxiously inquire the cause of her sickness, and, after much hesitation,

she reveals her love by inscribing a poem, with her finger-nail, on a lotus leaf smooth as a parrot's breast. The king hears the avowal of her love, rushes in to her, and declares his passion: adding that daughters of a royal saint have often been wedded by *Gandharva* rites, without ceremonies or parental consent, yet have not forfeited the father's blessing. He thus overcomes her scruples. Gautamí, the matron of the hermitage, afterwards enters, and asks, "My child, is your fever allayed?" "Venerable mother," is the reply, "I feel a grateful change." As the king sits in solitude that evening in the deserted arbor, he hears a voice outside, uttering the verses—"The evening rites have begun; but, dark as the clouds of night, the demons are swarming round the altar fires." With these words of ill-omen the third act comes to an end.

The fourth act describes the fulfilment of this evil omen. The king has now returned to the city, and has given Śakoontalá a signet ring, with an inscription on it, pronouncing that after there have elapsed as many days as there are letters in this inscription he will return. As the two maiden companions of Śakoontalá are culling flowers in the garden of the hermitage, they hear a voice exclaiming, "It is I! give heed!" This is the great Durvasas, whom Śakoontalá, lost in thoughts of her absent husband, has neglected at once to go forth to welcome. The voice from behind the scenes is soon after heard uttering a curse—"Woe unto her who is thus neglectful of a guest," and declaring that Dushyanta, of whom alone she is thinking, regardless of the presence of a pious saint, shall forget her in spite of all his love, as the wine-bibber forgets his delirium. The Hindoo saint is here described in all his arrogance and cruelty. One of the maidens says that he who had uttered the curse is now retiring with great strides, quivering with rage—for his wrath is like a consuming fire. A pretty picture is given of Śakoontalá, who carries on her finger the signet ring, which has the virtue of restoring the king's love, if ever he should forget her. "There sits our beloved friend," cries one of the maidens: "motionless as a picture; her cheek supported by her left hand, so absorbed in thoughts of her absent lover that she is unconscious of her own self—how much more of a passing stranger?"

In the fourth act there is an exquisite description of the

return of Kanwa from his pilgrimage, and the preparations for the start of Śakoontalá for her husband's palace, in the city. The delicate pathos of the scene is worthy of Euripides. "Alas! Alas!" exclaim the two maidens, "Now Śakoontalá has disappeared behind the trees of the forest. Tell us, master, how shall we enter again the sacred grove made desolate by her departure?" But the holy calm, broken for a moment by the excitement of his child's departure, is soon restored to Kanwa's mind. "Now that my child is dismissed to her husband's home, tranquillity regains my soul." The closing reflection is worthy of a Greek dramatist: "Our maids we rear for the happiness of others; and now that I have sent her to her husband I feel the satisfaction that comes from restoring a trust."

In the fifth act, the scene is laid in Dushyanta's palace, where the king is living, under the curse of Durvasas, in complete oblivion of Śakoontalá. The life of the court is happily suggested, with its intrigues and its business. The king has yet a vague impression of restlessness, which, on hearing a song sung behind the scenes, prompts him to say, "Why has this strain flung over me so deep a melancholy, as though I was separated from some loved one; can this be the faint remembrance of affections in some previous existence?" It is here that the hermits, with Gautamí, arrive, bringing Śakoontalá, soon to be made a mother, into the presence of the king; but she has been utterly forgotten by him. He angrily denies his marriage; and when she proposes to bring forth the ring, she finds she has lost it from her finger. "It must have slipped off," suggested Gautamí, "when thou wast offering homage to Śachí's holy lake." The king smiles derisively. Śakoontalá tries to quicken his memory:—"Do you remember how, in the jasmine bower, you poured water from the lotus cup into the hollow of my hand? Do you remember how you said to my little fawn, Drink first, but she shrunk from you—and drank water from my hand, and you said, with a smile, 'Like trusts Like,' for you are two sisters in the same grove." The king calls her words "honeyed falsehoods." Śakoontalá buries her face in her mantle and bursts into tears.

The tenderness of this scene, its grace and delicacy, are quite idyllic, and worthy of the best ages of the pastoral drama. The ring is at length restored to Dushyanta, having been found by

a fisherman in the belly of a carp. On its being restored to the king's finger, he is overcome with a flood of recollection: he gives himself over to mourning and forbids the celebration of the Spring festival. He admits that his palsied heart had been slumbering, and that, now it is roused by memories of his fawn-eyed love, he only wakes to agonies of remorse. Meanwhile Śakoontalá had been carried away like a celestial nymph to the sacred grove of Kaśyapa, far removed from earth in the upper air. The king, being summoned by Indra to destroy the brood of giants, descendants of Kalamemi, the monster of a hundred arms and heads, reaches in the celestial car Indra, the grove where dwell his wife and child, an heroic boy whom the hermits call Sarva-damana—the all-tamer. The recognition and reconciliation of husband and wife are delineated with the most delicate skill, and the play concludes with a prayer to Shiva.

E. W.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

DUSHYANTA, King of India.

MÁTHAVYA, the Jester, friend and companion of the King.

KANWA, chief of the Hermits, foster-father of Śakoontalá.

ŚÁRNGARAVA, ŚÁRADWATA, two Bráhmans, belonging to the hermitage of Kanwa.

MITRÁVASU, brother-in-law of the King, and Superintendent of the city police.

JÁNUKA, SÚCHAKA, two constables.

VÁTÁYANA, the Chamberlain or attendant on the women's apartments.

SOMARÁTA, the domestic Priest.

KARABHAKA, a messenger of the Queen-mother.

RAIVATAKA, the warder or door-keeper.

MÁTALI, charioteer of Indra.

SARVA-DAMANA, afterwards Bharata, a little boy, son of Dushyanta by Śakoontalá.

KAŚYAPA, a divine sage, progenitor of men and gods, son of Maríchi and grandson of Brahmá.

ŚAKOONTALÁ, daughter of the sage Viśwámitra and the nymph Menaká, foster-child of the hermit Kanwa.

PRIYAMVADÁ and ANASÚYÁ, female attendants, companions of Śakoontalá.

GAUTAMÍ, a holy matron, Superior of the female inhabitants of the hermitage.

VASUMATÍ, the Queen of Dushyanta.

SÁNUMATÍ, a nymph, friend of Śakoontalá.

TARALIKÁ, personal attendant of the King.

CHATURIKÁ, personal attendant of the Queen.

VETRAVATÍ, female warder, or door-keeper.

PARABARITIKÁ and MADHUKARIKÁ, maidens in charge of the royal gardens.

SUVRATÁ, a nurse.

ADITI, wife of Kaśyapa; grand-daughter of Brahmá, through her father, Daksha.

Charioteer, Fisherman, Officers, and Hermits.

RULES FOR PRONUNCIATION OF PROPER NAMES

Observe, that in order to secure the correct pronunciation of the title of this Drama, "Śakuntalá" has been spelt "Śakoontalá," the *u* being pronounced like the *u* in the English word *rule.*

The vowel *a* must invariably be pronounced with a dull sound, like the *a* in *organ,* or the *u* in *fun, sun. Dushyanta* must therefore be pronounced as if written *Dooshyunta.* The long vowel *á* is pronounced like the *a* in *last, cart; i* like the *i* in *pin, sin; í* like the *i* in *marine; e* like the *e* in *prey; o* like the *o* in *so; ai* like the *ai* in *aisle; au* like *au* in the German word *baum,* or like the *ou* in *our.*

The consonants are generally pronounced as in English, but *g* has always the sound of *g* in *gun, give,* never of *g* in *gin. S* with the accent over it (ś) has the sound of *s* in *sure,* or of the last *s* in *session.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ

PROLOGUE

Benediction

Iśa preserve you! he who is revealed
In these eight forms by man perceptible—
Water, of all creation's works the first;
The fire that bears on high the sacrifice
Presented with solemnity to heaven;
The Priest, the holy offerer of gifts;
The Sun and Moon, those two majestic orbs,
Eternal marshallers of day and night;
The subtle Ether, vehicle of sound,
Diffused throughout the boundless universe;
The Earth, by sages called "The place of birth
Of all material essences and things";
And Air, which giveth life to all that breathe.

STAGE-MANAGER [*after the recitation of the benediction, looking towards the tiring-room*].—Lady, when you have finished attiring yourself, come this way.

ACTRESS [*entering*].—Here I am, Sir; what are your commands?

STAGE-MANAGER.—We are here before the eyes of an audience of educated and discerning men; and have to represent in their presence a new drama composed by Kálidása, called "Śakoontalá, or the Lost Ring." Let the whole company exert themselves to do justice to their several parts.

ACTRESS.—You, Sir, have so judiciously managed the cast of the characters, that nothing will be defective in the acting.

STAGE-MANAGER.—Lady, I will tell you the exact state of the case.

No skill in acting can I deem complete,
Till from the wise the actor gain applause:
Know that the heart e'en of the truly skilful,
Shrinks from too boastful confidence in self.

ACTRESS [*modestly*].—You judge correctly. And now, what are your commands?

STAGE-MANAGER.—What can you do better than engage the attention of the audience by some captivating melody?

ACTRESS.—Which among the seasons shall I select as the subject of my song?

STAGE-MANAGER.—You surely ought to give the preference to the present Summer season that has but recently commenced, a season so rich in enjoyment. For now

Unceasing are the charms of halcyon days,
When the cool bath exhilarates the frame;
When sylvan gales are laden with the scent
Of fragrant Pátalas; when soothing sleep
Creeps softly on beneath the deepening shade;
And when, at last, the dulcet calm of eve
Entrancing steals o'er every yielding sense.

ACTRESS.—I will. [*Sings.*

Fond maids, the chosen of their hearts to please,
Entwine their ears with sweet Sirísha flowers,
Whose fragrant lips attract the kiss of bees
That softly murmur through the summer hours.

STAGE-MANAGER.—Charmingly sung! The audience are motionless as statues, their souls riveted by the enchanting strain. What subject shall we select for representation, that we may insure a continuance of their favor?

ACTRESS.—Why not the same, Sir, announced by you at first? Let the drama called "Śakoontalá, or the Lost Ring," be the subject of our dramatic performance.

STAGE-MANAGER.—Rightly reminded! For the moment I had forgotten it.

Your song's transporting melody decoyed
My thoughts, and rapt with ecstasy my soul;
As now the bounding antelope allures
The King Dushyanta on the chase intent. [*Exeunt.*

ACT FIRST

Scene.—A Forest

Enter King Dushyanta, armed with a bow and arrow, in a chariot, chasing an antelope, attended by his Charioteer.

CHARIOTEER [*looking at the deer, and then at the King*].—
Great Prince,
When on the antelope I bend my gaze,
And on your Majesty, whose mighty bow
Has its string firmly braced; before my eyes
The god that wields the trident seems revealed,
Chasing the deer that flies from him in vain.

KING.—Charioteer, this fleet antelope has drawn us far from my attendants. See! there he runs:—
Aye and anon his graceful neck he bends
To cast a glance at the pursuing car;
And dreading now the swift-descending shaft,
Contracts into itself his slender frame:
About his path, in scattered fragments strewn,
The half-chewed grass falls from his panting mouth;
See! in his airy bounds he seems to fly,
And leaves no trace upon th' elastic turf.
[*With astonishment.*
How now! swift as is our pursuit, I scarce can see him.

CHARIOTEER.—Sire, the ground here is full of hollows; I have therefore drawn in the reins and checked the speed of the chariot. Hence the deer has somewhat gained upon us. Now that we are passing over level ground, we shall have no difficulty in overtaking him.

KING.—Loosen the reins, then.

CHARIOTEER.—The King is obeyed. [*Drives the chariot at full speed.*] Great Prince, see! see!

Responsive to the slackened rein, the steeds
Chafing with eager rivalry, career
With emulative fleetness o'er the plain;
Their necks outstretched, their waving plumes, that late
Fluttered above their brows, are motionless;
Their sprightly ears, but now erect, bent low;
Themselves unsullied by the circling dust,
That vainly follows on their rapid course.

KING [*joyously*].—In good sooth, the horses seem as if they would outstrip the steeds of Indra and the Sun.[1]

That which but now showed to my view minute
Quickly assumes dimension; that which seemed
A moment since disjoined in diverse parts,
Looks suddenly like one compacted whole;
That which is really crooked in its shape
In the far distance left, grows regular;
Wondrous the chariot's speed, that in a breath,
Makes the near distant and the distant near.

Now, Charioteer, see me kill the deer. [*Takes aim.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—Hold, O King! this deer belongs to our hermitage. Kill it not! kill it not!

CHARIOTEER [*listening and looking*].—Great King, some hermits have stationed themselves so as to screen the antelope at the very moment of its coming within range of your arrow.

KING [*hastily*].—Then stop the horses.

CHARIOTEER.—I obey. [*Stops the chariot.*

Enter a Hermit, and two others with him.

HERMIT [*raising his hand*].—This deer, O King, belongs to our hermitage. Kill it not! kill it not!

Now heaven forbid this barbèd shaft descend
Upon the fragile body of a fawn,
Like fire upon a heap of tender flowers!
Can thy steel bolts no meeter quarry find
Than the warm life-blood of a harmless deer?
Restore, great Prince, thy weapon to its quiver;

[1] The speed of the chariot resembled that of the wind and the sun. Indra was the god of the firmament or atmosphere. The sun, in Hindoo mythology, is represented as seated in a chariot drawn by seven green horses, having before him a lovely youth without legs, who acts as charioteer, and who is Aruna, or the Dawn personified.

More it becomes thy arms to shield the weak,
Than to bring anguish on the innocent.

KING.—'Tis done. [*Replaces the arrow in its quiver.*

HERMIT.—Worthy is this action of a Prince, the light of Puru's race.

Well does this act befit a Prince like thee,
Right worthy is it of thine ancestry.
Thy guerdon be a son of peerless worth,
Whose wide dominion shall embrace the earth.

BOTH THE OTHER HERMITS [*raising their hands*].—May heaven indeed grant thee a son, a sovereign of the earth from sea to sea!

KING [*bowing*].—I accept with gratitude a Bráhman's benediction.

HERMIT.—We came hither, mighty Prince, to collect sacrificial wood. Here on the banks of the Máliní you may perceive the hermitage of the great sage Kanwa. If other duties require not your presence, deign to enter and accept our hospitality.

When you behold our penitential rites
Performed without impediment by Saints
Rich only in devotion, then with pride
Will you reflect, Such are the holy men
Who call me Guardian; such the men for whom
To wield the bow I bare my nervous arm,
Scarred by the motion of the glancing string.

KING.—Is the Chief of your Society now at home?

HERMIT.—No; he has gone to Soma-tírtha to propitiate Destiny, which threatens his daughter Śakoontalá with some calamity; but he has commissioned her in his absence to entertain all guests with hospitality.

KING.—Good! I will pay her a visit. She will make me acquainted with the mighty sage's acts of penance and devotion.

HERMIT.—And we will depart on our errand.

[*Exit with his companions.*

KING.—Charioteer, urge on the horses. We will at least purify our souls by a sight of this hallowed retreat.

CHARIOTEER.—Your Majesty is obeyed.

[*Drives the chariot with great velocity.*

KING [*looking all about him*].—Charioteer, even without be-

ing told, I should have known that these were the precincts of a grove consecrated to penitential rites.

CHARIOTEER.—How so?

KING.—Do not you observe?

Beneath the trees, whose hollow trunks afford
Secure retreat to many a nestling brood
Of parrots, scattered grains of rice lie strewn.
Lo! here and there are seen the polished slabs
That serve to bruise the fruit of Ingudí
The gentle roe-deer, taught to trust in man,
Unstartled hear our voices. On the paths
Appear the traces of bark-woven vests
Borne dripping from the limpid fount of waters.
And mark!
Laved are the roots of trees by deep canals,
Whose glassy waters tremble in the breeze;
The sprouting verdure of the leaves is dimmed
By dusky wreaths of upward curling smoke
From burnt oblations; and on new-mown lawns
Around our car graze leisurely the fawns.

CHARIOTEER.—I observe it all.

KING [*advancing a little further*].—The inhabitants of this sacred retreat must not be disturbed. Stay the chariot, that I may alight.

CHARIOTEER.—The reins are held in. Your Majesty may descend.

KING [*alighting*].—Charioteer, groves devoted to penance must be entered in humble attire. Take these ornaments. [*Delivers his ornaments and bow to the Charioteer.*] Charioteer, see that the horses are watered, and attend to them until I return from visiting the inhabitants of the hermitage.

CHARIOTEER.—I will. [*Exit.*

KING [*walking and looking about*].—Here is the entrance to the hermitage. I will now go in.

[*Entering he feels a throbbing sensation in his arm.*

Serenest peace is in this calm retreat,
By passion's breath unruffled; what portends
My throbbing arm? Why should it whisper here
Of happy love? Yet everywhere around us
Stand the closed portals of events unknown.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—This way, my dear companions; this way.

KING [*listening*].—Hark! I hear voices to the right of yonder grove of trees. I will walk in that direction. [*Walking and looking about.*] Ah! here are the maidens of the hermitage coming this way to water the shrubs, carrying watering-pots proportioned to their strength. [*Gazing at them.*] How graceful they look!

In palaces such charms are rarely ours;
The woodland plants outshine the garden flowers.

I will conceal myself in this shade and watch them.

[*Stands gazing at them.*

Enter Śakoontalá, with her two female companions, employed in the manner described.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—This way, my dear companions; this way.

ANASÚYÁ.—Dear Śakoontalá, one would think that father Kanwa had more affection for the shrubs of the hermitage even than for you, seeing he assigns to you who are yourself as delicate as the fresh-blown jasmine, the task of filling with water the trenches which encircle their roots.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Dear Anasúyá, although I am charged by my good father with this duty, yet I cannot regard it as a task. I really feel a sisterly love for these plants.

[*Continues watering the shrubs.*

KING.—Can this be the daughter of Kanwa? The saintly man, though descended from the great Kaśyapa, must be very deficient in judgment to habituate such a maiden to the life of a recluse.

The sage who would this form of artless grace
Inure to penance—thoughtlessly attempts
To cleave in twain the hard acacia's stem
With the soft edge of a blue lotus leaf.

Well! concealed behind this tree, I will watch her without raising her suspicions. [*Conceals himself.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Good Anasúyá, Priyamvadá has drawn this bark-dress too tightly about my chest. I pray thee, loosen it a little.

ANASÚYÁ.—I will. [*Loosens it.*

PRIYAMVADÁ [*smiling*].—Why do you lay the blame on me?

Blame rather your own blooming youthfulness which imparts fulness to your bosom.

KING.—A most just observation!

This youthful form, whose bosom's swelling charms
By the bark's knotted tissue are concealed,
Like some fair bud close folded in its sheath,
Gives not to view the blooming of its beauty.

But what am I saying? In real truth, this bark-dress, though ill-suited to her figure, sets it off like an ornament.

The lotus with the Saivala entwined
Is not a whit less brilliant: dusky spots
Heighten the lustre of the cold-rayed moon:
This lovely maiden in her dress of bark
Seems all the lovelier. E'en the meanest garb
Gives to true beauty fresh attractiveness.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*looking before her*].—Yon Keśara-tree beckons to me with its young shoots, which, as the breeze waves them to and fro, appear like slender fingers. I will go and attend to it. [*Walks towards it.*

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Dear Śakoontalá, prithee, rest in that attitude one moment.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Why so?

PRIYAMVADÁ.—The Keśara-tree, whilst your graceful form bends about its stem, appears as if it were wedded to some lovely twining creeper.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Ah! saucy girl, you are most appropriately named Priyamvadá ("Speaker of flattering things").

KING.—What Priyamvadá says, though complimentary, is nevertheless true. Verily,

Her ruddy lip vies with the opening bud;
Her graceful arms are as the twining stalks;
And her whole form is radiant with the glow
Of youthful beauty, as the tree with bloom.

ANASÚYÁ.—See, dear Śakoontalá, here is the young jasmine, which you named "the Moonlight of the Grove," the self-elected wife of the mango-tree. Have you forgotten it?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Rather will I forget myself. [*Approaching the plant and looking at it.*] How delightful is the season when the jasmine-creeper and the mango-tree seem thus to unite in mutual embraces! The fresh blossoms of the jasmine resemble the bloom of a young bride, and the

newly-formed shoots of the mango appear to make it her natural protector. [*Continues gazing at it.*

PRIYAMVADÁ [*smiling*].—Do you know, my Anasúyá, why Śakoontalá gazes so intently at the jasmine?

ANASÚYÁ.—No, indeed, I cannot imagine. I pray thee tell me.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—She is wishing that as the jasmine is united to a suitable tree, so, in like manner, she may obtain a husband worthy of her.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Speak for yourself, girl; this is the thought in your own mind. [*Continues watering the flowers.*

KING.—Would that my union with her were permissible! and yet I hardly dare hope that the maiden is sprung from a caste different from that of the Head of the hermitage. But away with doubt:—

That she is free to wed a warrior-king
My heart attests. For, in conflicting doubts,
The secret promptings of the good man's soul
Are an unerring index of the truth.

However, come what may, I will ascertain the fact.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*in a flurry*].—Ah! a bee, disturbed by the sprinkling of the water, has left the young jasmine, and is trying to settle on my face. [*Attempts to drive it away.*

KING [*gazing at her ardently*].—Beautiful! there is something charming even in her repulse.

Where'er the bee his eager onset plies,
Now here, now there, she darts her kindling eyes:
What love hath yet to teach, fear teaches now,
The furtive glances and the frowning brow.
[*In a tone of envy.*
Ah happy bee! how boldly dost thou try
To steal the lustre from her sparkling eye;
And in thy circling movements hover near,
To murmur tender secrets in her ear;
Or, as she coyly waves her hand, to sip
Voluptuous nectar from her lower lip!
While rising doubts my heart's fond hopes destroy,
Thou dost the fulness of her charms enjoy.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—This impertinent bee will not rest quiet. I must move elsewhere. [*Moving a few steps off, and casting a glance around.*] How now! he is following me here. Help! my dear friends, help! deliver me from the attacks of this troublesome insect.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—How can we deliver you? Call Dushyanta to your aid. The sacred groves are under the king's special protection.

KING.—An excellent opportunity for me to show myself. Fear not—[*Checks himself when the words are half-uttered. Aside.*] But stay, if I introduce myself in this manner, they will know me to be the King. Be it so, I will accost them, nevertheless.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*moving a step or two further off*].—What! it still persists in following me.

KING [*advancing hastily*].—When mighty Puru's offspring sways the earth,
And o'er the wayward holds his threatening rod,
Who dares molest the gentle maids that keep
Their holy vigils here in Kanwa's grove?
[*All look at the King, and are embarrassed.*

ANASÚYÁ.—Kind Sir, no outrage has been committed; only our dear friend here was teased by the attacks of a troublesome bee. [*Points to Śakoontalá.*

KING [*turning to Śakoontalá*].—I trust all is well with your devotional rites?
[*Śakoontalá stands confused and silent.*

ANASÚYÁ.—All is well, indeed, now that we are honored by the reception of a distinguished guest. Dear Śakoontalá, go, bring from the hermitage an offering of flowers, rice, and fruit. This water that we have brought with us will serve to bathe our guest's feet.

KING.—The rites of hospitality are already performed; your truly kind words are the best offering I can receive.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—At least be good enough, gentle Sir, to sit down awhile, and rest yourself on this seat shaded by the leaves of the Sapta-parna tree.

KING.—You, too, must all be fatigued by your employment.

ANASÚYÁ.—Dear Śakoontalá, there is no impropriety in our sitting by the side of our guest: come, let us sit down here.
[*All sit down together.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—How is it that the sight of this man has made me sensible of emotions inconsistent with religious vows?

KING [*gazing at them all by turns*].—How charmingly your friendship is in keeping with the equality of your ages and appearance!

PRIYAMVADÁ [*aside to Anasúyá*].—Who can this person be, whose lively yet dignified manner, and polite conversation, bespeak him a man of high rank?

ANASÚYÁ.—I, too, my dear, am very curious to know. I will ask him myself. [*Aloud.*] Your kind words, noble Sir, fill me with confidence, and prompt me to inquire of what regal family our noble guest is the ornament? what country is now mourning his absence? and what induced a person so delicately nurtured to expose himself to the fatigue of visiting this grove of penance?

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—Be not troubled, O my heart, Anasúyá is giving utterance to thy thoughts.

KING [*aside*].—How now shall I reply? shall I make myself known, or shall I still disguise my real rank? I have it; I will answer her thus. [*Aloud.*] I am the person charged by his majesty, the descendant of Puru, with the administration of justice and religion; and am come to this sacred grove to satisfy myself that the rites of the hermits are free from obstruction.

ANASÚYÁ.—The hermits, then, and all the members of our religious society have now a guardian.

[*Śakoontalá gazes bashfully at the King.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ [*perceiving the state of her feelings, and of the King's. Aside to Śakoontalá*].—Dear Śakoontalá, if father Kanwa were but at home to-day——

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*angrily*].—What if he were?

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—He would honor this our distinguished guest with an offering of the most precious of his possessions.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Go to! you have some silly idea in your minds. I will not listen to such remarks.

KING.—May I be allowed, in my turn, to ask you maidens a few particulars respecting your friend?

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—Your request, Sir, is an honor.

KING.—The sage Kanwa lives in the constant practice of austerities. How, then, can this friend of yours be called his daughter?

ANASÚYÁ.—I will explain to you, Sir. You have heard of an illustrious sage of regal caste, Viśwámitra, whose family name is Kaúsika.

KING.—I have.

ANASÚYÁ.—Know that he is the real father of our friend. The venerable Kanwa is only her reputed father. He it was who brought her up, when she was deserted by her mother.

KING.—"Deserted by her mother!" My curiosity is excited; pray let me hear the story from the beginning.

ANASÚYÁ.—You shall hear it, Sir. Some time since, this sage of regal caste, while performing a most severe penance on the banks of the river Godávarí, excited the jealousy and alarm of the gods; insomuch that they despatched a lovely nymph named Menaká to interrupt his devotions.

KING.—The inferior gods, I am aware, are jealous of the power which the practice of excessive devotion confers on mortals.

ANASÚYÁ.—Well, then, it happened that Viśwámitra, gazing on the bewitching beauty of that nymph at a season when, spring being in its glory——

[*Stops short, and appears confused.*

KING.—The rest may be easily divined. Śakoontalá, then, is the offspring of the nymph.

ANASÚYÁ.—Just so.

KING.—It is quite intelligible.

How could a mortal to such charms give birth?
The lightning's radiance flashes not from earth.

[*Śakoontalá remains modestly seated with downcast eyes.* [*Aside.*] And so my desire has really scope for its indulgence. Yet I am still distracted by doubts, remembering the pleasantry of her female companions respecting her wish for a husband.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*looking with a smile at Śakoontalá, and then turning towards the King*].—You seem desirous, Sir, of asking something further.

[*Śakoontalá makes a chiding gesture with her finger.*

KING.—You conjecture truly. I am so eager to hear the particulars of your friend's history, that I have still another question to ask.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Scruple not to do so. Persons who lead the life of hermits may be questioned unreservedly.

KING.—I wish to ascertain one point respecting your friend—

Will she be bound by solitary vows
Opposed to love, till her espousals only?
Or ever dwell with these her cherished fawns,

Whose eyes, in lustre vieing with her own,
Return her gaze of sisterly affection?

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Hitherto, Sir, she has been engaged in the practice of religious duties, and has lived in subjection to her foster-father; but it is now his fixed intention to give her away in marriage to a husband worthy of her.

KING [*aside*].—His intention may be easily carried into effect.

Be hopeful, O my heart, thy harrowing doubts
Are past and gone; that which thou didst believe
To be as unapproachable as fire,
Is found a glittering gem that may be touched.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*pretending anger*].—Anasúyá, I shall leave you.

ANASÚYÁ.—Why so?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—That I may go and report this impertinent Priyamvadá to the venerable matron, Gautamí.[2]

ANASÚYÁ.—Surely, dear friend, it would not be right to leave a distinguished guest before he has received the rights of hospitality, and quit his presence in this wilful manner.

[*Śakoontalá, without answering a word, moves away.*

KING [*making a movement to arrest her departure, but checking himself. Aside*].—Ah! a lover's feelings betray themselves by his gestures.

When I would fain have stayed the maid, a sense
Of due decorum checked my bold design:
Though I have stirred not, yet my mien betrays
My eagerness to follow on her steps.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*holding Śakoontalá back*].—Dear Śakoontalá, it does not become you to go away in this manner.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*frowning*].—Why not, pray?

PRIYAMVADÁ.—You are under a promise to water two more shrubs for me. When you have paid your debt, you shall go, and not before. [*Forces her to turn back.*

KING.—Spare her this trouble, gentle maiden. The exertion of watering the shrubs has already fatigued her.

The water-jar has overtasked the strength
Of her slim arms; her shoulders droop, her hands
Are ruddy with the glow of quickened pulses;
E'en now her agitated breath imparts
Unwonted tremor to her heaving breast;

[2] The Matron or Superior of the female part of the society of hermits. Their authority resembled that of an abbess in a convent of nuns.

The pearly drops that mar the recent bloom
Of the Śirísha pendant in her ear,
Gather in clustering circles on her cheek;
Loosed is the fillet of her hair: her hand
Restrains the locks that struggle to be free.
Suffer me, then, thus to discharge the debt for you.

[*Offers a ring to Priyamvadá. Both the maidens, reading the name Dushyanta on the seal, look at each other with surprise.*

KING.—Nay, think not that I am King Dushyanta. I am only the king's officer, and this is the ring which I have received from him as my credentials.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—The greater the reason you ought not to part with the ring from your finger. I am content to release her from her obligation at your simple request. [*With a smile.*] Now, Śakoontalá my love, you are at liberty to retire, thanks to the intercession of this noble stranger, or rather of this mighty prince.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—My movements are no longer under my own control. [*Aloud.*] Pray, what authority have you over me, either to send me away or keep me back?

KING [*gazing at Śakoontalá. Aside*].—Would I could ascertain whether she is affected towards me as I am towards her! At any rate, my hopes are free to indulge themselves. Because,

Although she mingles not her words with mine,
Yet doth her listening ear drink in my speech;
Although her eye shrinks from my ardent gaze,
No form but mine attracts its timid glances.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—O hermits, be ready to protect the animals belonging to our hermitage. King Dushyanta, amusing himself with hunting, is near at hand.

Lo! by the feet of prancing horses raised,
Thick clouds of moving dust, like glittering swarms
Of locusts in the glow of eventide,
Fall on the branches of our sacred trees;
Where hang the dripping vests of woven bark,
Bleached by the waters of the cleansing fountain.
And see!
Scared by the royal chariot in its course,
With headlong haste an elephant invades

The hallowed precincts of our sacred grove;
Himself the terror of the startled deer,
And an embodied hindrance to our rites.
The hedge of creepers clinging to his feet,
Feeble obstruction to his mad career,
Is dragged behind him in a tangled chain;
And with terrific shock one tusk he drives
Into the riven body of a tree,
Sweeping before him all impediments.

KING [*aside*].—Out upon it! my retinue are looking for me, and are disturbing this holy retreat. Well! there is no help for it; I must go and meet them.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—Noble Sir, we are terrified by the accidental disturbance caused by the wild elephant. Permit us to return into the cottage.

KING [*hastily*].—Go, gentle maidens. It shall be our care that no injury happen to the hermitage. [*All rise up.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—After such poor hospitality we are ashamed to request the honor of a second visit from you.

KING.—Say not so. The mere sight of you, sweet maidens, has been to me the best entertainment.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Anasúyá, a pointed blade of Kuśa-grass[8] has pricked my foot; and my bark-mantle is caught in the branch of a Kuruvaka-bush. Be so good as to wait for me until I have disentangled it.

[*Exit with her two companions, after making pretexts for delay, that she may steal glances at the King.*

KING.—I have no longer any desire to return to the city. I will therefore rejoin my attendants, and make them encamp somewhere in the vicinity of this sacred grove. In good truth, Śakoontalá has taken such possession of my thoughts, that I cannot turn myself in any other direction.

My limbs drawn onward leave my heart behind,
Like silken pennon borne against the wind.

[8] A grass held sacred by the Hindoos and freely used at their religious ceremonies. Its leaves are very long and taper to a needle-like point.

ACT SECOND

Scene.—A Plain on the Skirts of the Forest

Enter the Jester, Máthavya, in a melancholy mood.

MÁTHAVYA [*sighing*].—Heigh-ho! what an unlucky fellow I am! worn to a shadow by my royal friend's sporting propensities. "Here's a deer!" "There goes a boar!" "Yonder's a tiger!" This is the only burden of our talk, while in the heat of the meridian sun we toil on from jungle to jungle, wandering about in the paths of the woods, where the trees afford us no shelter. Are we thirsty? We have nothing to drink but the foul water of some mountain stream, filled with dry leaves which give it a most pungent flavor. Are we hungry? We have nothing to eat but roast game, which we must swallow down at odd times, as best we can. Even at night there is no peace to be had. Sleeping is out of the question, with joints all strained by dancing attendance upon my sporting friend; or if I do happen to doze, I am awakened at the very earliest dawn by the horrible din of a lot of rascally beaters and huntsmen, who must needs surround the wood before sunrise, and deafen me with their clatter. Nor are these my only troubles. Here's a fresh grievance, like a new boil rising upon an old one! Yesterday, while we were lagging behind, my royal friend entered yonder hermitage after a deer; and there, as ill-luck would have it, caught sight of a beautiful girl, called Śakoontalá, the hermit's daughter. From that moment, not another thought about returning to the city! and all last night, not a wink of sleep did he get for thinking of the damsel. What is to be done? At any rate, I will be on the watch for him as soon as he has finished his toilet. [*Walking and looking about.*] Oh! here he comes, attended by the

Yavana women with bows in their hands, and wearing garlands of wild flowers. What shall I do? I have it. I will pretend to stand in the easiest attitude for resting my bruised and crippled limbs. [*Stands leaning on a staff.*

Enter King Dushyanta, followed by a retinue in the manner described.

KING.—True, by no easy conquest may I win her,
Yet are my hopes encouraged by her mien.
Love is not yet triumphant; but, methinks,
The hearts of both are ripe for his delights.
[*Smiling.*] Ah! thus does the lover delude himself; judging of the state of his loved one's feelings by his own desires. But yet,
The stolen glance with half-averted eye,
The hesitating gait, the quick rebuke
Addressed to her companion, who would fain
Have stayed her counterfeit departure; these
Are signs not unpropitious to my suit.
So eagerly the lover feeds his hopes,
Claiming each trivial gesture for his own.

MÁTHAVYA [*still in the same attitude*].—Ah, friend, my hands cannot move to greet you with the usual salutation. I can only just command my lips to wish your majesty victory.

KING.—Why, what has paralyzed your limbs?

MÁTHAVYA.—You might as well ask me how my eye comes to water after you have poked your finger into it.

KING.—I don't understand you; speak more intelligibly.

MÁTHAVYA.—Ah, my dear friend, is yonder upright reed transformed into a crooked plant by its own act, or by the force of the current?

KING.—The current of the river causes it, I suppose.

MÁTHAVYA.—Aye; just as you are the cause of my crippled limbs.

KING.—How so?

MÁTHAVYA.—Here are you living the life of a wild man of the woods in a savage, unfrequented region, while your state affairs are left to shift for themselves; and as for poor me, I am no longer master of my own limbs, but have to follow you about day after day in your chases after wild animals,

till my bones are all crippled and out of joint. Do, my dear friend, let me have one day's rest.

KING [*aside*].—This fellow little knows, while he talks in this manner, that my mind is wholly engrossed by recollections of the hermit's daughter, and quite as disinclined to the chase as his own.

No longer can I bend my well-braced bow
Against the timid deer; nor e'er again
With well-aimed arrows can I think to harm
These her beloved associates, who enjoy
The privilege of her companionship;
Teaching her tender glances in return.

MÁTHAVYA [*looking in the King's face*].—I may as well speak to the winds, for any attention you pay to my requests. I suppose you have something on your mind, and are talking it over to yourself.

KING [*smiling*].—I was only thinking that I ought not to disregard a friend's request.

MÁTHAVYA.—Then may the King live forever! [*Moves off.*

KING.—Stay a moment, my dear friend. I have something else to say to you.

MÁTHAVYA.—Say on, then.

KING.—When you have rested, you must assist me in another business, which will give you no fatigue.

MÁTHAVYA.—In eating something nice, I hope.

KING.—You shall know at some future time.

MÁTHAVYA.—No time better than the present.

KING.—What ho! there.

WARDER [*entering*].—What are your Majesty's commands?

KING.—O Raivataka! bid the General of the forces attend.

WARDER.—I will, Sire. [*Exit and reënters with the General.*] Come forward, General; his Majesty is looking towards you, and has some order to give you.

GENERAL [*looking at the King*].—Though hunting is known to produce ill effects, my royal master has derived only benefit from it. For

Like the majestic elephant that roams
O'er mountain wilds, so does the King display
A stalwart frame, instinct with vigorous life.
His brawny arms and manly chest are scored
By frequent passage of the sounding string;

Unharmed he bears the mid-day sun; no toil
His mighty spirit daunts; his sturdy limbs,
Stripped of redundant flesh, relinquish nought
Of their robust proportions, but appear
In muscle, nerve, and sinewy fibre cased.

[*Approaching the King.*] Victory to the King! We have tracked the wild beasts to their lairs in the forest. Why delay, when everything is ready?

KING.—My friend Máthavya here has been disparaging the chase, till he has taken away all my relish for it.

GENERAL [*aside to Máthavya*].—Persevere in your opposition, my good fellow; I will sound the King's real feelings, and humor him accordingly. [*Aloud.*] The blockhead talks nonsense, and your Majesty, in your own person, furnishes the best proof of it. Observe, Sire, the advantage and pleasure the hunter derives from the chase.

Freed from all grosser influences, his frame
Loses its sluggish humors, and becomes
Buoyant, compact, and fit for bold encounter.
'Tis his to mark with joy the varied passions,
Fierce heats of anger, terror, blank dismay,
Of forest animals that cross his path.
Then what a thrill transports the hunter's soul,
When, with unerring course, his driven shaft
Pierces the moving mark! Oh! 't is conceit
In moralists to call the chase a vice;
What recreation can compare with this?

MÁTHAVYA [*angrily*].—Away! tempter, away! The King has recovered his senses, and is himself again. As for you, you may, if you choose, wander about from forest to forest, till some old bear seizes you by the nose, and makes a mouthful of you.

KING.—My good General, as we are just now in the neighborhood of a consecrated grove, your panegyric upon hunting is somewhat ill-timed, and I cannot assent to all you have said. For the present,

All undisturbed the buffaloes shall sport
In yonder pool, and with their ponderous horns
Scatter its tranquil waters, while the deer,
Couched here and there in groups beneath the shade
Of spreading branches, ruminate in peace.

And all securely shall the herd of boars
Feed on the marshy sedge; and thou, my bow,
With slackened string enjoy a long repose.

GENERAL.—So please your Majesty, it shall be as you desire.

KING.—Recall, then, the beaters who were sent in advance to surround the forest. My troops must not be allowed to disturb this sacred retreat, and irritate its pious inhabitants.

Know that within the calm and cold recluse
Lurks unperceived a germ of smothered flame,
All-potent to destroy; a latent fire
That rashly kindled bursts with fury forth:—
As in the disc of crystal that remains
Cool to the touch, until the solar ray
Falls on its polished surface, and excites
The burning heat that lies within concealed.

GENERAL.—Your Majesty's commands shall be obeyed.

MÁTHAVYA.—Off with you, you son of a slave! Your nonsense won't go down here, my fine fellow. [*Exit General.*

KING [*looking at his attendants*].—Here, women, take my hunting-dress; and you, Raivataka, keep guard carefully outside.

ATTENDANTS.—We will, sire. [*Exeunt.*

MÁTHAVYA.—Now that you have got rid of these plagues, who have been buzzing about us like so many flies, sit down, do, on that stone slab, with the shade of the tree as your canopy, and I will seat myself by you quite comfortably.

KING.—Go you, and sit down first.

MÁTHAVYA.—Come along, then.

[*Both walk on a little way, and seat themselves.*

KING.—Máthavya, it may be said of you that you have never beheld anything worth seeing: for your eyes have not yet looked upon the loveliest object in creation.

MÁTHAVYA.—How can you say so, when I see your Majesty before me at this moment?

KING.—It is very natural that everyone should consider his own friend perfect; but I was alluding to Śakoontalá, the brightest ornament of these hallowed groves.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*].—I understand well enough, but I am not going to humor him. [*Aloud.*] If, as you intimate, she is a hermit's daughter, you cannot lawfully ask her in

marriage. You may as well, then, dismiss her from your mind, for any good the mere sight of her can do.

KING.—Think you that a descendant of the mighty Puru could fix his affections on an unlawful object?

Though, as men say, the offspring of the sage,
The maiden to a nymph celestial owes
Her being, and by her mother left on earth,
Was found and nurtured by the holy man
As his own daughter, in this hermitage;—
So, when dissevered from its parent stalk,
Some falling blossom of the jasmine, wafted
Upon the sturdy sunflower, is preserved
By its support from premature decay.

MÁTHAVYA [*smiling*].—This passion of yours for a rustic maiden, when you have so many gems of women at home in your palace, seems to me very like the fancy of a man who is tired of sweet dates, and longs for sour tamarinds as a variety.

KING.—You have not seen her, or you would not talk in this fashion.

MÁTHAVYA.—I can quite understand it must require something surpassingly attractive to excite the admiration of such a great man as you.

KING.—I will describe her, my dear friend, in a few words—

Man's all-wise Maker, wishing to create
A faultless form, whose matchless symmetry
Should far transcend Creation's choicest works,
Did call together by his mighty will,
And garner up in his eternal mind,
A bright assemblage of all lovely things:—
And then, as in a picture, fashion them
Into one perfect and ideal form.
Such the divine, the wondrous prototype,
Whence her fair shape was moulded into being.

MÁTHAVYA.—If that's the case, she must indeed throw all other beauties into the shade.

KING.—To my mind she really does.

This peerless maid is like a fragrant flower,
Whose perfumed breath has never been diffused;
A tender bud, that no profaning hand
Has dared to sever from its parent stalk;

A gem of priceless water, just released
Pure and unblemished from its glittering bed.
Or may the maiden haply be compared
To sweetest honey, that no mortal lip
Has sipped; or, rather to the mellowed fruit
Of virtuous actions in some former birth,
Now brought to full perfection? Lives the man
Whom bounteous heaven has destined to espouse her?

MÁTHAVYA.—Make haste, then, to her aid; you have no time to lose, if you don't wish this fruit of all the virtues to drop into the mouth of some greasy-headed rustic of devout habits.

KING.—The lady is not her own mistress, and her foster-father is not at home.

MÁTHAVYA.—Well, but tell me, did she look at all kindly upon you?

KING.—Maidens brought up in a hermitage are naturally shy and reserved; but for all that,

She did look towards me, though she quick withdrew
Her stealthy glances when she met my gaze;
She smiled upon me sweetly, but disguised
With maiden grace the secret of her smiles.
Coy love was half unveiled; then, sudden checked
By modesty, left half to be divined.

MÁTHAVYA.—Why, of course, my dear friend, you never could seriously expect that at the very first sight she would fall over head and ears in love with you, and without more ado come and sit in your lap.

KING.—When we parted from each other, she betrayed her liking for me by clearer indications, but still with the utmost modesty.

Scarce had the fair one from my presence passed,
When, suddenly, without apparent cause,
She stopped, and counterfeiting pain, exclaimed,
"My foot is wounded by this prickly grass."
Then glancing at me tenderly, she feigned
Another charming pretext for delay,
Pretending that a bush had caught her robe,
And turned as if to disentangle it.

MÁTHAVYA.—I trust you have laid in a good stock of provisions, for I see you intend making this consecrated grove

your game-preserve, and will be roaming here in quest of sport for some time to come.

KING.—You must know, my good fellow, that I have been recognized by some of the inmates of the hermitage. Now I want the assistance of your fertile invention, in devising some excuse for going there again.

MÁTHAVYA.—There is but one expedient that I can suggest. You are the King, are you not?

KING.—What then?

MÁTHAVYA.—Say you have come for the sixth part of their grain, which they owe you for tribute.

KING.—No, no, foolish man; these hermits pay me a very different kind of tribute, which I value more than heaps of gold or jewels; observe,

The tribute which my other subjects bring
Must moulder into dust, but holy men
Present me with a portion of the fruits
Of penitential services and prayers—
A precious and imperishable gift.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—We are fortunate; here is the object of our search.

KING [*listening*].—Surely those must be the voices of hermits, to judge by their deep tones.

WARDER [*entering*].—Victory to the King! two young hermits are in waiting outside, and solicit an audience of your Majesty.

KING.—Introduce them immediately.

WARDER.—I will, my liege. [*Goes out, and reënters with two young Hermits.*] This way, Sirs, this way.

[*Both the Hermits look at the King.*

FIRST HERMIT.—How majestic is his mien, and yet what confidence it inspires! But this might be expected in a king whose character and habits have earned for him a title only one degree removed from that of a Saint.

In this secluded grove, whose sacred joys
All may participate, he deigns to dwell
Like one of us; and daily treasures up
A store of purest merit for himself,
By the protection of our holy rites.
In his own person wondrously are joined
Both majesty and saintlike holiness:—

And often chanted by inspirèd bards,
His hallowed title of "Imperial Sage"
Ascends in joyous accents to the skies.

SECOND HERMIT.—Bear in mind, Gautama, that this is the great Dushyanta, the friend of Indra.

FIRST HERMIT.—What of that?

SECOND HERMIT.—Where is the wonder if his nervous arm,
Puissant and massive as the iron bar
That binds a castle-gateway, singly sways
The sceptre of the universal earth,
E'en to its dark-green boundary of waters?
Or if the gods, beholden to his aid
In their fierce warfare with the powers of hell,
Should blend his name with Indra's in their songs
Of victory, and gratefully accord
No lower meed of praise to his braced bow,
Than to the thunders of the god of heaven?

BOTH THE HERMITS [*approaching*].—Victory to the King!

KING [*rising from his seat*].—Hail to you both!

BOTH THE HERMITS.—Heaven bless your Majesty!

[*They offer fruits.*

KING [*respectfully receiving the offering*].—Tell me, I pray you, the object of your visit.

BOTH THE HERMITS.—The inhabitants of the hermitage having heard of your Majesty's sojourn in our neighborhood, make this humble petition.

KING.—What are their commands?

BOTH THE HERMITS.—In the absence of our Superior, the great Sage Kanwa, evil demons are disturbing our sacrificial rites.[4] Deign, therefore, accompanied by your charioteer, to take up your abode in our hermitage for a few days.

KING.—I am honored by your invitation.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*].—Most opportune and convenient, certainly!

KING [*smiling*].—Ho! there, Raivataka! Tell the charioteer from me to bring round the chariot with my bow.

WARDER.—I will, Sire.

[*Exit.*

BOTH THE HERMITS [*joyfully*].—Well it becomes the King by acts of grace

[4] The religious rites of holy men were often disturbed by certain evil spirits called Rákshasas, who were the determined enemies of piety and devotion.

To emulate the virtues of his race.
Such acts thy lofty destiny attest;
Thy mission is to succor the distressed.

KING [*bowing to the Hermits*].—Go first, reverend Sirs, I will follow you immediately.

BOTH THE HERMITS.—May victory attend you! [*Exeunt.*

KING.—My dear Máthavya, are you not full of longing to see Śakoontalá?

MÁTHAVYA.—To tell you the truth, though I was just now brimful of desire to see her, I have not a drop left since this piece of news about the demons.

KING.—Never fear; you shall keep close to me for protection.

MÁTHAVYA.—Well, you must be my guardian-angel, and act the part of a very Vishnu[5] to me.

WARDER [*entering*].—Sire, the chariot is ready, and only waits to conduct you to victory. But here is a messenger named Karabhaka, just arrived from your capital, with a message from the Queen, your mother.

KING [*respectfully*].—How say you? a messenger from the venerable Queen?

WARDER.—Even so.

KING.—Introduce him at once.

WARDER.—I will, Sire. [*Goes out, and reënters with Karabhaka.*] Behold the King! Approach.

KARABHAKA.—Victory to the King! The Queen-mother bids me say that in four days from the present time she intends celebrating a solemn ceremony for the advancement and preservation of her son. She expects that your Majesty will honor her with your presence on that occasion.

KING.—This places me in a dilemma. Here, on the one hand, is the commission of these holy men to be executed; and, on the other, the command of my revered parent to be obeyed. Both duties are too sacred to be neglected. What is to be done?

MÁTHAVYA.—You will have to take up an intermediate position between the two, like King Triśanku, who was suspended between heaven and earth, because the sage Viśwámitra commanded him to mount up to heaven, and the gods ordered him down again.

KING.—I am certainly very much perplexed. For here,

[5] Vishnu, the Preserver, was one of the three principal gods.

Two different duties are required of me
In widely distant places; how can I
In my own person satisfy them both?
Thus is my mind distracted and impelled
In opposite directions, like a stream
That, driven back by rocks, still rushes on,
Forming two currents in its eddying course.

[*Reflecting.*] Friend Máthavya, as you were my playfellow in childhood, the Queen has always received you like a second son; go you, then, back to her and tell her of my solemn engagement to assist these holy men. You can supply my place in the ceremony, and act the part of a son to the Queen.

MÁTHAVYA.—With the greatest pleasure in the world; but don't suppose that I am really coward enough to have the slightest fear of those trumpery demons.

KING [*smiling*].—Oh! of course not; a great Bráhman like you could not possibly give way to such weakness.

MÁTHAVYA.—You must let me travel in a manner suitable to the King's younger brother.

KING.—Yes, I shall send my retinue with you, that there may be no further disturbance in this sacred forest.

MÁTHAVYA [*with a strut*].—Already I feel quite like a young prince.

KING [*aside*].—This is a giddy fellow, and in all probability he will let out the truth about my present pursuit to the women of the palace. What is to be done? I must say something to deceive him. [*Aloud to Máthavya, taking him by the hand.*] Dear friend, I am going to the hermitage wholly and solely out of respect for its pious inhabitants, and not because I have really any liking for Śakoontalá, the hermit's daughter. Observe,

What suitable communion could there be
Between a monarch and a rustic girl?
I did but feign an idle passion, friend,
Take not in earnest what was said in jest.

MÁTHAVYA.—Don't distress yourself; I quite understand.

[*Exeunt.*

PRELUDE TO ACT THIRD

Scene.—The Hermitage

Enter a young Bráhman, carrying bundles of Kuśa-grass for the use of the sacrificing priests.

YOUNG BRÁHMAN.—How wonderful is the power of King Dushyanta! No sooner did he enter our hermitage, than we were able to proceed with our sacrificial rites, unmolested by the evil demons.

No need to fix the arrow to the bow;
The mighty monarch sounds the quivering string,
And, by the thunder of his arms dismayed,
Our demon foes are scattered to the wind.

I must now, therefore, make haste and deliver to the sacrificing priests these bundles of Kuśa-grass, to be strewn round the altar. [*Walking and looking about; then addressing someone off the stage.*] Why, Priyamvadá, for whose use are you carrying that ointment of Usíra-root and those lotus leaves with fibres attached to them? [*Listening for her answer.*] What say you?—that Śakoontalá is suffering from fever produced by exposure to the sun, and that this ointment is to cool her burning frame? Nurse her with care, then, Priyamvadá, for she is cherished by our reverend Superior as the very breath of his nostrils. I, for my part, will contrive that soothing waters, hallowed in the sacrifice, be administered to her by the hands of Gautamí. [*Exit.*

ACT THIRD

Scene.—The Sacred Grove

Enter King Dushyanta, with the air of one in love.

KING [*sighing thoughtfully*].—The holy sage possesses magic power
In virtue of his penance; she, his ward,
Under the shadow of his tutelage
Rests in security. I know it well;
Yet sooner shall the rushing cataract
In foaming eddies re-ascend the steep,
Than my fond heart turn back from its pursuit.
God of Love! God of the flowery shafts![6] we are all of us cruelly deceived by thee, and by the Moon, however deserving of confidence you may both appear.
For not to us do these thine arrows seem
Pointed with tender flowerets; not to us
Doth the pale moon irradiate the earth
With beams of silver fraught with cooling dews:—
But on our fevered frames the moon-beams fall
Like darts of fire, and every flower-tipped shaft
Of Káma, as it probes our throbbing hearts,
Seems to be barbed with hardest adamant.
Adorable god of love! hast thou no pity for me? [*In a tone of anguish.*] How can thy arrows be so sharp when they are pointed with flowers? Ah! I know the reason:
E'en now in thine unbodied essence lurks
The fire of Śiva's anger, like the flame
That ever hidden in the secret depths
Of ocean, smoulders there unseen. How else
Couldst thou, all immaterial as thou art,

[6] Káma, the Hindoo Cupid, or god of love. He has five arrows, each tipped with the blossom of a flower, which pierce the heart through the five senses.

Inflame our hearts thus fiercely?—thou, whose form
Was scorched to ashes by a sudden flash
From the offended god's terrific eye.

Yet, methinks,

Welcome this anguish, welcome to my heart
These rankling wounds inflicted by the god,
Who on his scutcheon bears the monster-fish
Slain by his prowess: welcome death itself,
So that, commissioned by the lord of love,
This fair one be my executioner.

Adorable divinity! Can I by no reproaches excite your commiseration?

Have I not daily offered at thy shrine
Innumerable vows, the only food
Of thine ethereal essence? Are my prayers
Thus to be slighted? Is it meet that thou
Shouldst aim thy shafts at thy true votary's heart,
Drawing thy bow-string even to thy ear?

[*Pacing up and down in a melancholy manner.*] Now that the holy men have completed their rites, and have no more need of my services, how shall I dispel my melancholy? [*Sighing.*] I have but one resource. Oh for another sight of the idol of my soul! I will seek her. [*Glancing at the sun.*] In all probability, as the sun's heat is now at its height, Śakoontalá is passing her time under the shade of the bowers on the banks of the Máliní, attended by her maidens. I will go and look for her there. [*Walking and looking about.*] I suspect the fair one has but just passed by this avenue of young trees.

Here, as she tripped along, her fingers plucked
The opening buds: these lacerated plants,
Shorn of their fairest blossoms by her hand,
Seem like dismembered trunks, whose recent wounds
Are still unclosed; while from the bleeding socket
Of many a severed stalk, the milky juice
Still slowly trickles, and betrays her path.

[*Feeling a breeze.*] What a delicious breeze meets me in this spot!

Here may the zephyr, fragrant with the scent
Of lotuses, and laden with the spray
Caught from the waters of the rippling stream,

Fold in its close embrace my fevered limbs.

[*Walking and looking about.*] She must be somewhere in the neighborhood of this arbor of overhanging creepers, enclosed by plantations of cane. [*Looking down.*

For at the entrance here I plainly see
A line of footsteps printed in the sand.
Here are the fresh impressions of her feet;
Their well-known outline faintly marked in front,
More deeply towards the heel; betokening
The graceful undulation of her gait.

I will peep through those branches. [*Walking and looking. With transport.*] Ah! now my eyes are gratified by an entrancing sight. Yonder is the beloved of my heart reclining on a rock strewn with flowers, and attended by her two friends. How fortunate! Concealed behind the leaves, I will listen to their conversation, without raising their suspicions. [*Stands concealed, and gazes at them.*

Sakoontalá and her two attendants, holding fans in their hands, are discovered as described.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ [*fanning her. In a tone of affection.*]—Dearest Śakoontalá, is the breeze raised by these broad lotus leaves refreshing to you?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Dear friends, why should you trouble yourselves to fan me?

[*Priyamvadá and Anasúyá look sorrowfully at one another.*

KING.—Śakoontalá seems indeed to be seriously ill. [*Thoughtfully.*] Can it be the intensity of the heat that has affected her? or does my heart suggest the true cause of her malady? [*Gazing at her passionately.*] Why should I doubt it?

The maiden's spotless bosom is o'erspread
With cooling balsam; on her slender arm
Her only bracelet, twined with lotus stalks,
Hangs loose and withered; her recumbent form
Expresses languor. Ne'er could noon-day sun
Inflict such fair disorder on a maid—
No, love, and love alone, is here to blame.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*aside to Anasúyá*].—I have observed, Anasúyá, that Śakoontalá has been indisposed ever since her first

interview with King Dushyanta. Depend upon it, her ailment is to be traced to this source.

ANASÚYÁ.—The same suspicion, dear Priyamvadá, has crossed my mind. But I will at once ask her and ascertain the truth. [*Aloud.*] Dear Śakoontalá, I am about to put a question to you. Your indisposition is really very serious.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*half-rising from her couch*].—What were you going to ask?

ANASÚYÁ.—We know very little about love-matters, dear Śakoontalá; but for all that, I cannot help suspecting your present state to be something similar to that of the lovers we have read about in romances. Tell us frankly what is the cause of your disorder. It is useless to apply a remedy, until the disease be understood.

KING.—Anasúyá bears me out in my suspicion.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—I am, indeed, deeply in love; but cannot rashly disclose my passion to these young girls.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—What Anasúyá says, dear Śakoontalá, is very just. Why give so little heed to your ailment? Every day you are becoming thinner; though I must confess your complexion is still as beautiful as ever.

KING.—Priyamvadá speaks most truly.

Sunk is her velvet cheek; her wasted bosom
Loses its fulness; e'en her slender waist
Grows more attenuate; her face is wan,
Her shoulders droop;—as when the vernal blasts
Sear the young blossoms of the Mádhaví,
Blighting their bloom; so mournful is the change,
Yet in its sadness, fascinating still,
Inflicted by the mighty lord of love
On the fair figure of the hermit's daughter.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Dear friends, to no one would I rather reveal the nature of my malady than to you; but I should only be troubling you.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—Nay, this is the very point about which we are so solicitous. Sorrow shared with affectionate friends is relieved of half its poignancy.

KING.—Pressed by the partners of her joys and griefs,
Her much beloved companions, to reveal
The cherished secret locked within her breast,
She needs must utter it; although her looks

Encourage me to hope, my bosom throbs
As anxiously I listen for her answer.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Know then, dear friends, that from the first moment the illustrious Prince, who is the guardian of our sacred grove, presented himself to my sight—

[*Stops short, and appears confused.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—Say on, dear Śakoontalá, say on.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Ever since that happy moment, my heart's affections have been fixed upon him, and my energies of mind and body have all deserted me, as you see.

KING [*with rapture*].—Her own lips have uttered the words I most longed to hear.

Love lit the flame, and Love himself allays
My burning fever, as when gathering clouds
Rise o'er the earth in summer's dazzling noon,
And grateful showers dispel the morning heat.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—You must consent, then, dear friends, to contrive some means by which I may find favor with the King, or you will have ere long to assist at my funeral.

KING [*with rapture*].—Enough! These words remove all my doubts.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*aside to Anasúyá*].—She is far gone in love, dear Anasúyá, and no time ought to be lost. Since she has fixed her affections on a monarch who is the ornament of Puru's line, we need not hesitate for a moment to express our approval.

ANASÚYÁ.—I quite agree with you.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*aloud*].—We wish you joy, dear Śakoontalá. Your affections are fixed on an object in every respect worthy of you. The noblest river will unite itself to the ocean, and the lovely Mádhaví-creeper clings naturally to the Mango, the only tree capable of supporting it.

KING.—Why need we wonder if the beautiful constellation Viśákhá pines to be united with the Moon.

ANASÚYÁ.—By what stratagem can we best secure to our friend the accomplishment of her heart's desire, both speedily and secretly?

PRIYAMVADÁ.—The latter point is all we have to think about. As to "speedily," I look upon the whole affair as already settled.

ANASÚYÁ.—How so?

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Did you not observe how the King betrayed his liking by the tender manner in which he gazed upon her, and how thin he has become the last few days, as if he had been lying awake thinking of her?

KING [*looking at himself*].—Quite true! I certainly am becoming thin from want of sleep:—

As night by night in anxious thought I raise
This wasted arm to rest my sleepless head,
My jewelled bracelet, sullied by the tears
That trickle from my eyes in scalding streams,
Slips towards my elbow from my shrivelled wrist.
Oft I replace the bauble, but in vain;
So easily it spans the fleshless limb
That e'en the rough and corrugated skin,
Scarred by the bow-string, will not check its fall.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*thoughtfully*].—An idea strikes me, Anasúyá. Let Śakoontalá write a love-letter; I will conceal it in a flower, and contrive to drop it in the King's path. He will surely mistake it for the remains of some sacred offering, and will, in all probability, pick it up.

ANASÚYÁ.—A very ingenious device! It has my entire approval; but what says Śakoontalá?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—I must consider before I can consent to it.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Could you not, dear Śakoontalá, think of some pretty composition in verse, containing a delicate declaration of your love?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Well, I will do my best; but my heart trembles when I think of the chances of a refusal.

KING [*with rapture*].—Too timid maid, here stands the man from whom
Thou fearest a repulse; supremely blessed
To call thee all his own. Well might he doubt
His title to thy love; but how couldst thou
Believe thy beauty powerless to subdue him?

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—You undervalue your own merits, dear Śakoontalá. What man in his senses would intercept with the skirt of his robe the bright rays of the autumnal moon, which alone can allay the fever of his body?

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*smiling*].—Then it seems I must do as I am bid. [*Sits down and appears to be thinking.*

KING.—How charming she looks! My very eyes forget to wink, jealous of losing even for an instant a sight so enchanting.

How beautiful the movement of her brow,
As through her mind love's tender fancies flow!
And, as she weighs her thoughts, how sweet to trace
The ardent passion mantling in her face!

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Dear girls, I have thought of a verse, but I have no writing-materials at hand.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Write the letters with your nail on this lotus leaf, which is smooth as a parrot's breast.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*after writing the verse*].—Listen, dear friends, and tell me whether the ideas are appropriately expressed.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—We are all attention.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*reads*].—

I know not the secret thy bosom conceals,
Thy form is not near me to gladden my sight;
But sad is the tale that my fever reveals,
Of the love that consumes me by day and by night.

KING [*advancing hastily towards her*].—

Nay, Love does but warm thee, fair maiden—thy frame
Only droops like the bud in the glare of the noon;
But me he consumes with a pitiless flame,
As the beams of the day-star destroy the pale moon.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ [*looking at him joyfully, and rising to salute him*].—Welcome, the desire of our hearts, that so speedily presents itself!

[*Śakoontalá makes an effort to rise.*

KING.—Nay, trouble not thyself, dear maiden,
Move not to do me homage; let thy limbs
Still softly rest upon their flowery couch,
And gather fragrance from the lotus stalks
Bruised by the fevered contact of thy frame.

ANASÚYÁ.—Deign, gentle Sir, to seat yourself on the rock on which our friend is reposing.

[*The King sits down. Śakoontalá is confused.*

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Anyone may see at a glance that you are deeply attached to each other. But the affection I have for my friend prompts me to say something of which you hardly require to be informed.

KING.—Do not hesitate to speak out, my good girl. If you

omit to say what is in your mind, you may be sorry for it afterwards.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Is it not your special office as a King to remove the suffering of your subjects who are in trouble?

KING.—Such is my duty, most assuredly.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Know, then, that our dear friend has been brought to her present state of suffering entirely through love for you. Her life is in your hands; take pity on her and restore her to health.

KING.—Excellent maiden, our attachment is mutual. It is I who am the most honored by it.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*looking at Priyamvadá*].—What do you mean by detaining the King, who must be anxious to return to his royal consorts after so long a separation?

KING.—Sweet maiden, banish from thy mind the thought
That I could love another. Thou dost reign
Supreme, without a rival, in my heart,
And I am thine alone: disown me not,
Else must I die a second deadlier death—
Killed by thy words, as erst by Káma's shafts.

ANASÚYÁ.—Kind Sir, we have heard it said that kings have many favorite consorts. You must not, then, by your behavior towards our dear friend, give her relations cause to sorrow for her.

KING.—Listen, gentle maiden, while in a few words I quiet your anxiety.
Though many beauteous forms my palace grace,
Henceforth two things alone will I esteem
The glory of my royal dynasty;—
My sea-girt realm, and this most lovely maid.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—We are satisfied by your assurances.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*glancing on one side*].—See, Anasúyá, there is our favorite little fawn running about in great distress, and turning its eyes in every direction as if looking for its mother; come, let us help the little thing to find her.

[*Both move away.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Dear friends, dear friends, leave me not alone and unprotected. Why need you both go?

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—Unprotected! when the Protector of the world is at your side. [*Exeunt.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—What! have they both really left me?

KING.—Distress not thyself, sweet maiden. Thy adorer is at hand to wait upon thee.

Oh, let me tend thee, fair one, in the place
Of thy dear friends; and, with broad lotus fans,
Raise cooling breezes to refresh thy frame;
Or shall I rather, with caressing touch,
Allay the fever of thy limbs, and soothe
Thy aching feet, beauteous as blushing lilies?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Nay, touch me not. I will not incur the censure of those whom I am bound to respect.

[*Rises and attempts to go.*

KING.—Fair one, the heat of noon has not yet subsided, and thy body is still feeble.

How canst thou quit thy fragrant couch of flowers,
And from thy throbbing bosom cast aside
Its covering of lotus leaves, to brave
With weak and fainting limbs the noon-day heat?

[*Forces her to turn back.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Infringe not the rules of decorum, mighty descendant of Puru. Remember, though I love you, I have no power to dispose of myself.

KING.—Why this fear of offending your relations, timid maid? When your venerable foster-father hears of it, he will not find fault with you. He knows that the law permits us to be united without consulting him.

In Indra's heaven, so at least 'tis said,
No nuptial rites prevail,[7] nor is the bride
Led to the altar by her future spouse;
But all in secret does the bridegroom plight
His troth, and each unto the other vow
Mutual allegiance. Such espousals, too,
Are authorized on earth, and many daughters
Of royal saints thus wedded to their lords,
Have still received their father's benison.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Leave me, leave me; I must take counsel with my female friends.

KING.—I will leave thee when——

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—When?

[7] A marriage without the usual ceremonies is called Gándharva. It was supposed to be the form of marriage prevalent among the nymphs of Indra's heaven.

KING.—When I have gently stolen from thy lips
Their yet untasted nectar, to allay
The raging of my thirst, e'en as the bee
Sips the fresh honey from the opening bud.

[*Attempts to raise her face. Śakoontalá tries to prevent him.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—The loving birds, doomed by fate to nightly separation, must bid farewell to each other, for evening is at hand.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*in confusion*].—Great Prince, I hear the voice of the matron Gautamí. She is coming this way, to inquire after my health. Hasten and conceal yourself behind the branches.

KING.—I will. [*Conceals himself.*

Enter Gautamí with a vase in her hand, preceded by two attendants.

ATTENDANTS.—This way, most venerable Gautamí.

GAUTAMÍ [*approaching Śakoontalá*].—My child, is the fever of thy limbs allayed?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Venerable mother, there is certainly a change for the better.

GAUTAMÍ.—Let me sprinkle you with this holy water, and all your ailments will depart. [*Sprinkling Śakoontalá on the head.*] The day is closing, my child; come, let us go to the cottage. [*They all move away.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—Oh my heart! thou didst fear to taste of happiness when it was within thy reach. Now that the object of thy desires is torn from thee, how bitter will be thy remorse, how distracting thine anguish! [*Moving on a few steps and stopping. Aloud.*] Farewell! bower of creepers, sweet soother of my sufferings, farewell! may I soon again be happy under thy shade.

[*Exit reluctantly with the others.*

KING [*returning to his former seat in the arbor. Sighing*].—Alas! how many are the obstacles to the accomplishment of our wishes!

Albeit she did coyly turn away
Her glowing cheek, and with her fingers guard
Her pouting lips, that murmured a denial
In faltering accents, she did yield herself

A sweet reluctant captive to my will,
As eagerly I raised her lovely face:
But ere with gentle force I stole the kiss,
Too envious Fate did mar my daring purpose.

Whither now shall I betake myself? I will tarry for a brief space in this bower of creepers, so endeared to me by the presence of my beloved Śakoontalá.

[*Looking round.*

Here printed on the flowery couch I see
The fair impression of her slender limbs;
Here is the sweet confession of her love,
Traced with her nail upon the lotus leaf—
And yonder are the withered lily stalks
That graced her wrist. While all around I view
Things that recall her image, can I quit
This bower, e'en though its living charm be fled?

A Voice [*in the air*].—Great King,
Scarce is our evening sacrifice begun,
When evil demons, lurid as the clouds
That gather round the dying orb of day,
Cluster in hideous troops, obscene and dread,
About our altars, casting far and near
Terrific shadows, while the sacred fire
Sheds a pale lustre o'er their ghostly shapes.

King.—I come to the rescue, I come. [*Exit.*

PRELUDE TO ACT FOURTH

Scene.—The Garden of the Hermitage

Enter Priyamvadá and Anasúyá in the act of gathering flowers.

ANASÚYÁ.—Although, dear Priyamvadá, it rejoices my heart to think that Śakoontalá has been happily united to a husband in every respect worthy of her, by the form of marriage prevalent among Indra's celestial musicians, nevertheless, I cannot help feeling somewhat uneasy in my mind.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—How so?

ANASÚYÁ.—You know that the pious King was gratefully dismissed by the hermits on the successful termination of their sacrificial rites. He has now returned to his capital, leaving Śakoontalá under our care; and it may be doubted whether, in the society of his royal consorts, he will not forget all that has taken place in this hermitage of ours.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—On that score be at ease. Persons of his noble nature are not so destitute of all honorable feeling. I confess, however, that there is one point about which I am rather anxious. What, think you, will father Kanwa say when he hears what has occurred?

ANASÚYÁ.—In my opinion, he will approve the marriage.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—What makes you think so?

ANASÚYÁ.—From the first, it was always his fixed purpose to bestow the maiden on a husband worthy of her; and since heaven has given her such a husband, his wishes have been realized without any trouble to himself.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*looking at the flower-basket*].—We have gathered flowers enough for the sacred offering, dear Anasúyá.

ANASÚYÁ.—Well, then, let us now gather more, that we may

have wherewith to propitiate the guardian-deity of our dear Śakoontalá.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—By all means. [*They continue gathering.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—Ho there! See you not that I am here?

ANASÚYÁ [*listening*].—That must be the voice of a guest announcing his arrival.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Surely, Śakoontalá is not absent from the cottage. [*Aside.*] Her heart at least is absent, I fear.

ANASÚYÁ.—Come along, come along; we have gathered flowers enough. [*They move away.*

THE SAME VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—Woe to thee, maiden, for daring to slight a guest like me!

Shall I stand here unwelcomed; even I,
A very mine of penitential merit,
Worthy of all respect? Shalt thou, rash maid,
Thus set at nought the ever sacred ties
Of hospitality? and fix thy thoughts
Upon the cherished object of thy love,
While I am present? Thus I curse thee, then—
He, even he of whom thou thinkest, he
Shall think no more of thee; nor in his heart
Retain thine image. Vainly shalt thou strive
To waken his remembrance of the past;
He shall disown thee, even as the sot,
Roused from his midnight drunkenness, denies
The words he uttered in his revellings.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Alas! alas! I fear a terrible misfortune has occurred. Śakoontalá, from absence of mind, must have offended some guest whom she was bound to treat with respect. [*Looking behind the scenes.*] Ah! yes; I see, and no less a person than the great sage Durvasas, who is known to be most irascible. He it is that has just cursed her, and is now retiring with hasty strides, trembling with passion, and looking as if nothing could turn him. His wrath is like a consuming fire.

ANASÚYÁ.—Go quickly, dear Priyamvadá, throw yourself at his feet, and persuade him to come back, while I prepare a propitiatory offering for him, with water and refreshments.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—I will. [*Exit.*

ANASÚYÁ [*advancing hastily a few steps and stumbling*].—Alas! alas! this comes of being in a hurry. My foot has slipped and my basket of flowers has fallen from my hand. [*Stays to gather them up.*

PRIYAMVADÁ [*reëntering*].—Well, dear Anasúyá, I have done my best; but what living being could succeed in pacifying such a cross-grained, ill-tempered old fellow? However, I managed to mollify him a little.

ANASÚYÁ [*smiling*].—Even a little was much for him. Say on.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—When he refused to turn back, I implored his forgiveness in these words: "Most venerable sage, pardon, I beseech you, this first offence of a young and inexperienced girl, who was ignorant of the respect due to your saintly character and exalted rank."

ANASÚYÁ.—And what did he reply?

PRIYAMVADÁ.—"My word must not be falsified; but at the sight of the ring of recognition the spell shall cease." So saying, he disappeared.

ANASÚYÁ.—Oh! then we may breathe again; for now I think of it, the King himself, at his departure, fastened on Śakoontalá's finger, as a token of remembrance, a ring on which his own name was engraved. She has, therefore, a remedy for her misfortune at her own command.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Come, dear Anasúyá, let us proceed with our religious duties. [*They walk away.*

PRIYAMVADÁ [*looking off the stage*].—See, Anasúyá, there sits our dear friend, motionless as a statue, resting her face on her left hand, her whole mind absorbed in thinking of her absent husband. She can pay no attention to herself, much less to a stranger.

ANASÚYÁ.—Priyamvadá, let this affair never pass our lips. We must spare our dear friend's feelings. Her constitution is too delicate to bear much emotion.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—I agree with you. Who would think of watering a tender jasmine with hot water?

ACT FOURTH

Scene.—The Neighborhood of the Hermitage

Enter one of Kanwa's pupils, just arisen from his couch at the dawn of day.

PUPIL.—My master, the venerable Kanwa, who is but lately returned from his pilgrimage, has ordered me to ascertain how the time goes. I have therefore come into the open air to see if it be still dark. [*Walking and looking about.*] Oh! the dawn has already broken.

Lo! in one quarter of the sky, the Moon,
Lord of the herbs and night-expanding flowers,
Sinks towards his bed behind the western hills;
While in the east, preceded by the Dawn,
His blushing charioteer, the glorious Sun
Begins his course, and far into the gloom
Casts the first radiance of his orient beams.
Hail! co-eternal orbs, that rise to set,
And set to rise again; symbols divine
Of man's reverses, life's vicissitudes.

And now,

While the round Moon withdraws his looming disc
Beneath the western sky, the full-blown flower
Of the night-loving lotus sheds her leaves
In sorrow for his loss, bequeathing nought
But the sweet memory of her loveliness
To my bereavèd sight: e'en as the bride
Disconsolately mourns her absent lord,
And yields her heart a prey to anxious grief.

ANASÚYÁ [*entering abruptly*].—Little as I know of the ways of the world, I cannot help thinking that King Dushyanta is treating Śakoontalá very improperly.

PUPIL.—Well, I must let my revered preceptor know that it is time to offer the burnt oblation. [*Exit.*

ANASÚYÁ.—I am broad awake, but what shall I do? I have no energy to go about my usual occupations. My hands and feet seem to have lost their power. Well, Love has gained his object; and Love only is to blame for having induced our dear friend, in the innocence of her heart, to confide in such a perfidious man. Possibly, however, the imprecation of Durvasas may be already taking effect. Indeed, I cannot otherwise account for the King's strange conduct, in allowing so long a time to elapse without even a letter; and that, too, after so many promises and protestations. I cannot think what to do, unless we send him the ring which was to be the token of recognition. But which of these austere hermits could we ask to be the bearer of it? Then, again, Father Kanwa has just returned from his pilgrimage: and how am I to inform him of Śakoontalá's marriage to King Dushyanta, and her expectation of being soon a mother? I never could bring myself to tell him, even if I felt that Śakoontalá had been in fault, which she certainly has not. What is to be done?

PRIYAMVADÁ [*entering; joyfully*].—Quick! quick! Anasúyá! come and assist in the joyful preparations for Śakoontalá's departure to her husband's palace.

ANASÚYÁ.—My dear girl, what can you mean?

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Listen, now, and I will tell you all about it. I went just now to Śakoontalá, to inquire whether she had slept comfortably——

ANASÚYÁ.—Well, well; go on.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—She was sitting with her face bowed down to the very ground with shame, when Father Kanwa entered and, embracing her, of his own accord offered her his congratulations. "I give thee joy, my child," he said, "we have had an auspicious omen. The priest who offered the oblation dropped it into the very centre of the sacred fire, though thick smoke obstructed his vision. Henceforth thou wilt cease to be an object of compassion. This very day I purpose sending thee, under the charge of certain trusty hermits, to the King's palace; and shall deliver thee into the hands of thy husband, as I would commit knowledge to the keeping of a wise and faithful student."

ANASÚYÁ.—Who, then, informed the holy Father of what passed in his absence?

PRIYAMVADÁ.—As he was entering the sanctuary of the consecrated fire, an invisible being chanted a verse in celestial strains.

ANASÚYÁ [*with astonishment*].—Indeed! pray repeat it.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*repeats the verse*].—

Glows in thy daughter King Dushyanta's glory,
As in the sacred tree the mystic fire.
Let worlds rejoice to hear the welcome story;
And may the son immortalize the sire.

ANASÚYÁ [*embracing Priyamvadá*].—Oh, my dear Priyamvadá, what delightful news! I am pleased beyond measure; yet when I think that we are to lose our dear Śakoontalá this very day, a feeling of melancholy mingles with my joy.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—We shall find means of consoling ourselves after her departure. Let the dear creature only be made happy, at any cost.

ANASÚYÁ.—Yes, yes, Priyamvadá, it shall be so; and now to prepare our bridal array. I have always looked forward to this occasion, and some time since, I deposited a beautiful garland of Keśara flowers in a cocoa-nut box, and suspended it on a bough of yonder mango-tree. Be good enough to stretch out your hand and take it down, while I compound unguents and perfumes with this consecrated paste and these blades of sacred grass.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Very well.

[*Exit Anasúyá. Priyamvadá takes down the flowers.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—Gautamí, bid Śárngarava and the others hold themselves in readiness to escort Śakoontalá.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*listening*].—Quick, quick, Anasúyá! They are calling the hermits who are to go with Śakoontalá to Hastinápur.

ANASÚYÁ [*reëntering, with the perfumed unguents in her hand*].—Come along then, Priyamvadá; I am ready to go with you.

[*They walk away.*

PRIYAMVADÁ [*looking*].—See! there sits Śakoontalá, her locks arranged even at this early hour of the morning. The holy women of the hermitage are congratulating her,

and invoking blessings on her head, while they present her with wedding-gifts and offerings of consecrated wild-rice. Let us join them. [*They approach.*

Śakoontalá is seen seated, with women surrounding her, occupied in the manner described.

FIRST WOMAN [*to Sakoontalá*].—My child, may'st thou receive the title of "Chief-queen," and may thy husband delight to honor thee above all others!

SECOND WOMAN.—My child, may'st thou be the mother of a hero!

THIRD WOMAN.—My child, may'st thou be highly honored by thy lord!

[*Exeunt all the women, excepting Gautamí, after blessing Śakoontalá.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ [*approaching*].—Dear Śakoontalá, we are come to assist you at your toilet, and may a blessing attend it!

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Welcome, dear friends, welcome. Sit down here.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ [*taking the baskets containing the bridal decorations, and sitting down*].—Now, then, dearest, prepare to let us dress you. We must first rub your limbs with these perfumed unguents.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—I ought indeed to be grateful for your kind offices, now that I am so soon to be deprived of them. Dear, dear friends, perhaps I shall never be dressed by you again. [*Bursts into tears.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—Weep not, dearest, tears are out of season on such a happy occasion.

[*They wipe away her tears and begin to dress her.*

PRIYAMVADÁ.—Alas! these simple flowers and rude ornaments which our hermitage offers in abundance, do not set off your beauty as it deserves.

Enter two young Hermits, bearing costly presents.

BOTH HERMITS.—Here are ornaments suitable for a queen.

[*The women look at them in astonishment.*

GAUTAMÍ.—Why, Nárada, my son, whence came these?

FIRST HERMIT.—You owe them to the devotion of Father Kanwa.

GAUTAMÍ.—Did he create them by the power of his own mind?

SECOND HERMIT.—Certainly not; but you shall hear. The venerable sage ordered us to collect flowers for Śakoontalá from the forest-trees; and we went to the wood for that purpose, when

Straightway depending from a neighboring tree
Appeared a robe of linen tissue, pure
And spotless as a moon-beam—mystic pledge
Of bridal happiness; another tree
Distilled a roseate dye wherewith to stain
The lady's feet; and other branches near
Glistened with rare and costly ornaments.
While, 'midst the leaves, the hands of forest-nymphs,
Vying in beauty with the opening buds,
Presented us with sylvan offerings.

PRIYAMVADÁ [*looking at Śakoontalá*].—The wood-nymphs have done you honor, indeed. This favor doubtless signifies that you are soon to be received as a happy wife into your husband's house, and are from this forward to become the partner of his royal fortunes.

[*Śakoontalá appears confused.*

FIRST HERMIT.—Come, Gautama; Father Kanwa has finished his ablutions. Let us go and inform him of the favor we have received from the deities who preside over our trees.

SECOND HERMIT.—By all means. [*Exeunt.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—Alas! what are we to do? We are unused to such splendid decorations, and are at a loss how to arrange them. Our knowledge of painting must be our guide. We will dispose the ornaments as we have seen them in pictures.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Whatever pleases you, dear girls, will please me. I have perfect confidence in your taste.

[*They commence dressing her.*

Enter Kanwa, having just finished his ablutions.

KANWA.—This day my loved one leaves me, and my heart
Is heavy with its grief: the streams of sorrow
Choked at the source, repress my faltering voice.

I have no words to speak; mine eyes are dimmed
By the dark shadows of the thoughts that rise
Within my soul. If such the force of grief
In an old hermit parted from his nursling,
What anguish must the stricken parent feel—
Bereft forever of an only daughter?

[*Advances towards Śakoontalá.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—Now, dearest Śakoontalá, we have finished decorating you. You have only to put on the two linen mantles.

[*Śakoontalá rises and puts them on.*

GAUTAMÍ.—Daughter, see, here comes thy foster-father; he is eager to fold thee in his arms; his eyes swim with tears of joy. Hasten to do him reverence.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*reverently*].—My father, I salute you.

KANWA.—My daughter,

May'st thou be highly honored by thy lord,
E'en as Yayáti Śarmishthá adored!
And, as she bore him Puru, so may'st thou
Bring forth a son to whom the world shall bow!

GAUTAMÍ.—Most venerable father, she accepts your benediction as if she already possessed the boon it confers.

KANWA.—Now come this way, my child, and walk reverently round these sacrificial fires. [*They all walk round.*

KANWA [*repeats a prayer in the metre of the Rig-veda*].—

Holy flames, that gleam around
Every altar's hallowed ground;
Holy flames, whose frequent food
Is the consecrated wood,
And for whose encircling bed,
Sacred Kuśa-grass is spread;
Holy flames, that waft to heaven
Sweet oblations daily given,
Mortal guilt to purge away;—
Hear, oh hear me, when I pray—
Purify my child this day!

Now then, my daughter, set out on thy journey. [*Looking on one side.*] Where are thy attendants, Śárngarava and the others?

YOUNG HERMIT [*entering*].—Here we are, most venerable father.

KANWA.—Lead the way for thy sister.

ŚÁRṄGARAVA.—Come, Śakoontalá, let us proceed.

[*All move away.*

KANWA.—Hear me, ye trees that surround our hermitage!

Śakoontalá ne'er moistened in the stream
Her own parched lips, till she had fondly poured
Its purest water on your thirsty roots;
And oft, when she would fain have decked her hair
With your thick-clustering blossoms, in her love
She robbed you not e'en of a single flower.
Her highest joy was ever to behold
The early glory of your opening buds:
Oh, then, dismiss her with a kind farewell!
This very day she quits her father's home,
To seek the palace of her wedded lord.

[*The note of a Köil is heard.*

Hark! heard'st thou not the answer of the trees,
Our sylvan sisters, warbled in the note
Of the melodious Köil? they dismiss
Their dear Śakoontalá with loving wishes.

VOICES [*in the air*].—

Fare thee well, journey pleasantly on amid streams
Where the lotuses bloom, and the sun's glowing beams
Never pierce the deep shade of the wide-spreading trees,
While gently around thee shall sport the cool breeze;
Then light be thy footsteps and easy thy tread,
Beneath thee shall carpets of lilies be spread.
Journey on to thy lord, let thy spirit be gay,
For the smiles of all Nature shall gladden thy way.

[*All listen with astonishment.*

GAUTAMÍ.—Daughter! the nymphs of the wood, who love thee with the affection of a sister, dismiss thee with kind wishes for thy happiness. Take thou leave of them reverentially.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*bowing respectfully and walking on. Aside to her friend*].—Eager as I am, dear Priyamvadá, to see my hsuband once more, yet my feet refuse to move, now that I am quitting forever the home of my girlhood.

PRIYAMVADÁ.—You are not the only one, dearest, to feel the bitterness of parting. As the time of separation approaches, the whole grove seems to share your anguish.

In sorrow for thy loss, the herd of deer
Forget to browse; the peacock on the lawn
Ceases its dance; the very trees around us
Shed their pale leaves, like tears, upon the ground.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*recollecting herself*].—My father, let me, before I go, bid adieu to my pet jasmine, the Moonlight of the Grove. I love the plant almost as a sister.

KANWA.—Yes, yes, my child, I remember thy sisterly affection for the creeper. Here it is on the right.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*approaching the jasmine*].—My beloved jasmine, most brilliant of climbing plants, how sweet it is to see thee cling thus fondly to thy husband, the mango-tree; yet, prithee, turn thy twining arms for a moment in this direction to embrace thy sister; she is going far away, and may never see thee again.

KANWA.—Daughter, the cherished purpose of my heart
Has ever been to wed thee to a spouse
That should be worthy of thee; such a spouse
Hast thou thyself, by thine own merits, won.
To him thou goest, and about his neck
Soon shalt thou cling confidingly, as now
Thy favorite jasmine twines its loving arms
Around the sturdy mango. Leave thou it
To its protector—e'en as I consign
Thee to thy lord, and henceforth from my mind
Banish all anxious thought on thy behalf.
Proceed on thy journey, my child.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*to Priyamvadá and Anasúyá*].—To you, my sweet companions, I leave it as a keepsake. Take charge of it when I am gone.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ [*bursting into tears*].—And to whose charge do you leave us, dearest? Who will care for us when you are gone?

KANWA.—For shame, Anasúyá! dry your tears. Is this the way to cheer your friend at a time when she needs your support and consolation? [*All move on.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—My father, see you there my pet deer, grazing close to the hermitage? She expects soon to fawn, and even now the weight of the little one she carries hinders her movements. Do not forget to send me word when she becomes a mother.

KANWA.—I will not forget it.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*feeling herself drawn back*].—What can this be, fastened to my dress? [*Turns round.*

KANWA.—My daughter,

It is the little fawn, thy foster-child.
Poor helpless orphan! it remembers well
How with a mother's tenderness and love
Thou didst protect it, and with grains of rice
From thine own hand didst daily nourish it;
And, ever and anon, when some sharp thorn
Had pierced its mouth, how gently thou didst tend
The bleeding wound, and pour in healing balm.
The grateful nursling clings to its protectress,
Mutely imploring leave to follow her.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—My poor little fawn, dost thou ask to follow an unhappy woman who hesitates not to desert her companions? When thy mother died, soon after thy birth, I supplied her place, and reared thee with my own hand; and now that thy second mother is about to leave thee, who will care for thee? My father, be thou a mother to her. My child, go back, and be a daughter to my father.

[*Moves on, weeping.*

KANWA.—Weep not, my daughter, check the gathering tear
That lurks beneath thine eyelid, ere it flow
And weaken thy resolve; be firm and true—
True to thyself and me; the path of life
Will lead o'er hill and plain, o'er rough and smooth,
And all must feel the steepness of the way;
Though rugged be thy course, press boldly on.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Venerable sire! the sacred precept is—"Accompany thy friend as far as the margin of the first stream." Here then, we are arrived at the border of a lake. It is time for you to give us your final instructions and return.

KANWA.—Be it so; let us tarry for a moment under the shade of this fig-tree. [*They do so.*

KANWA [*aside*].—I must think of some appropriate message to send to his majesty King Dushyanta. [*Reflects.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside to Anasúyá*].—See, see, dear Anasúyá, the poor female Chakraváka-bird, whom cruel fate dooms to nightly separation from her mate, calls to him in mourn-

ful notes from the other side of the stream, though he is only hidden from her view by the spreading leaves of the water-lily. Her cry is so piteous that I could almost fancy she was lamenting her hard lot in intelligible words.

ANASÚYÁ.—Say not so, dearest.

Fond bird! though sorrow lengthen out her night
Of widowhood, yet with a cry of joy
She hails the morning light that brings her mate
Back to her side. The agony of parting
Would wound us like a sword, but that its edge
Is blunted by the hope of future meeting.

KANWA.—Śárngarava, when you have introduced Śakoontalá into the presence of the King, you must give him this message from me.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Let me hear it, venerable father.

KANWA.—This is it—

Most puissant prince! we here present before thee
One thou art bound to cherish and receive
As thine own wife; yea, even to enthrone
As thine own queen—worthy of equal love
With thine imperial consorts. So much, Sire,
We claim of thee as justice due to us,
In virtue of our holy character—
In virtue of thine honorable rank—
In virtue of the pure spontaneous love
That secretly grew up 'twixt thee and her,
Without consent or privity of us.
We ask no more—the rest we freely leave
To thy just feeling and to destiny.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—A most suitable message. I will take care to deliver it correctly.

KANWA.—And now, my child, a few words of advice for thee. We hermits, though we live secluded from the world, are not ignorant of worldly matters.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—No, indeed. Wise men are conversant with all subjects.

KANWA.—Listen, then, my daughter. When thou reachest thy husband's palace, and art admitted into his family,

Honor thy betters; ever be respectful
To those above thee; and, should others share
Thy husband's love, ne'er yield thyself a prey

To jealousy; but ever be a friend,
A loving friend, to those who rival thee
In his affections. Should thy wedded lord
Treat thee with harshness, thou must never be
Harsh in return, but patient and submissive.
Be to thy menials courteous, and to all
Placed under thee, considerate and kind:
Be never self-indulgent, but avoid
Excess in pleasure; and, when fortune smiles,
Be not puffed up. Thus to thy husband's house
Wilt thou a blessing prove, and not a curse.

What thinks Gautamí of this advice?

GAUTAMÍ.—An excellent compendium, truly, of every wife's duties! Lay it well to heart, my daughter.

KANWA.—Come, my beloved child, one parting embrace for me and for thy companions, and then we leave thee.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—My father, must Priyamvadá and Anasúyá really return with you? They are very dear to me.

KANWA.—Yes, my child; they, too, in good time, will be given in marriage to suitable husbands. It would not be proper for them to accompany thee to such a public place. But Gautamí shall be thy companion.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*embracing him*].—Removed from thy bosom, my beloved father, like a young tendril of the sandal-tree torn from its home in the western mountains,[8] how shall I be able to support life in a foreign soil?

KANWA.—Daughter, thy fears are groundless:—
Soon shall thy lord prefer thee to the rank
Of his own consort; and unnumbered cares
Befitting his imperial dignity
Shall constantly engross thee. Then the bliss
Of bearing him a son—a noble boy,
Bright as the day-star—shall transport thy soul
With new delights, and little shalt thou reck
Of the light sorrow that afflicts thee now
At parting from thy father and thy friends.

[*Śakoontalá throws herself at her foster-father's feet.*

KANWA.—Blessings on thee, my child! May all my hopes of thee be realized!

[8] The sandal-tree is a large kind of myrtle, with pointed leaves. The wood affords many highly esteemed perfumes and is celebrated for its delicious scent. It is chiefly found on the slopes of the Malay mountains or Western Ghants, on the Malabar coast.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*approaching her friends*].—Come, my two loved companions, embrace me—both of you together.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ [*embracing her*].—Dear Śakoontalá, remember, if the King should by any chance be slow in recognizing you, you have only to show him this ring, on which his own name is engraved.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—The bare thought of it puts me in a tremor.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—There is no real cause for fear, dearest. Excessive affection is too apt to suspect evil where none exists.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Come, lady, we must hasten on. The sun is rising in the heavens.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*looking towards the hermitage*].—Dear father, when shall I ever see this hallowed grove again?

KANWA.—I will tell thee; listen—

When thou hast passed a long and blissful life
As King Dushyanta's queen, and jointly shared
With all the earth his ever-watchful care;
And hast beheld thine own heroic son,
Matchless in arms, united to a spouse
In happy wedlock; when his aged sire,
Thy faithful husband, hath to him resigned
The helm of state; then, weary of the world,
Together with Dushyanta thou shalt seek
The calm seclusion of thy former home:—
There amid holy scenes to be at peace,
Till thy pure spirit gain its last release.

GAUTAMÍ.—Come, my child, the favorable time for our journey is fast passing. Let thy father return. Venerable Sire, be thou the first to move homewards, or these last words will never end.

KANWA.—Daughter, detain me no longer. My religious duties must not be interrupted.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*again embracing her foster-father*].—Beloved father, thy frame is much enfeebled by penitential exercises. Do not, oh! do not, allow thyself to sorrow too much on my account.

KANWA [*sighing*].—How, O my child, shall my bereavèd heart
Forget its bitterness, when, day by day,
Full in my sight shall grow the tender plants
Reared by thy care, or sprung from hallowed grain

Which thy loved hands have strewn around the door—
A frequent offering to our household gods?
Go, my daughter, and may thy journey be prosperous.

[*Exit Śakoontalá with her escort.*

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ [*gazing after Śakoontalá*].—Alas! alas! she is gone, and now the trees hide our darling from our view.

KANWA [*sighing*].—Well, Anasúyá, your sister has departed. Moderate your grief, both of you, and follow me. I go back to the hermitage.

PRIYAMVADÁ AND ANASÚYÁ.—Holy father, the sacred grove will be a desert without Śakoontalá. How can we ever return to it?

KANWA.—It is natural enough that your affection should make you view it in this light. [*Walking pensively on.*] As for me, I am quite surprised at myself. Now that I have fairly dismissed her to her husband's house, my mind is easy: for indeed,

A daughter is a loan—a precious jewel
Lent to a parent till her husband claim her.
And now that to her rightful lord and master
I have delivered her, my burdened soul
Is lightened, and I seem to breathe more freely.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT FIFTH

Scene.—A Room in the Palace

The King Dushyanta and the Jester Máthavya are discovered seated.

MÁTHAVYA [*listening*].—Hark! my dear friend, listen a minute, and you will hear sweet sounds proceeding from the music-room. Someone is singing a charming air. Who can it be? Oh! I know. The queen Hansapadiká is practising her notes, that she may greet you with a new song.

KING.—Hush! Let me listen.

A VOICE [*sings behind the scenes*].—

How often hither didst thou rove,
Sweet bee, to kiss the mango's cheek;
Oh! leave not, then, thy early love,
The lily's honeyed lip to seek.

KING.—A most impassioned strain, truly!

MÁTHAVYA.—Do you understand the meaning of the words?

KING [*smiling*].—She means to reprove me, because I once paid her great attention, and have lately deserted her for the queen Vasumatí. Go, my dear fellow, and tell Hansapadiká from me that I take her delicate reproof as it is intended.

MÁTHAVYA.—Very well. [*Rising from his seat.*] But stay—I don't much relish being sent to bear the brunt of her jealousy. The chances are that she will have me seized by the hair of the head and beaten to a jelly. I would as soon expose myself, after a vow of celibacy, to the seductions of a lovely nymph, as encounter the fury of a jealous woman.

KING.—Go, go; you can disarm her wrath by a civil speech; but give her my message.

MÁTHAVYA.—What must be must be, I suppose. [*Exit.*

KING [*aside*].—Strange! that song has filled me with a most peculiar sensation. A melancholy feeling has come over me, and I seem to yearn after some long-forgotten object of affection. Singular, indeed! but,

Not seldom in our happy hours of ease,
When thought is still, the sight of some fair form,
Or mournful fall of music breathing low,
Will stir strange fancies, thrilling all the soul
With a mysterious sadness, and a sense
Of vague yet earnest longing. Can it be
That the dim memory of events long past,
Or friendships formed in other states of being,
Flits like a passing shadow o'er the spirit?

[*Remains pensive and sad.*

Enter the Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN.—Alas! to what an advanced period of life have I attained!

Even this wand betrays the lapse of years;
In youthful days 'twas but a useless badge
And symbol of my office; now it serves
As a support to prop my tottering steps.

Ah me! I feel very unwilling to announce to the King that a deputation of young hermits from the sage Kanwa has arrived, and craves an immediate audience. Certainly, his majesty ought not to neglect a matter of sacred duty, yet I hardly like to trouble him when he has just risen from the judgment-seat. Well, well; a monarch's business is to sustain the world, and he must not expect much repose; because—

Onward, forever onward, in his car
The unwearied Sun pursues his daily course,
Nor tarries to unyoke his glittering steeds.
And ever moving speeds the rushing Wind
Through boundless space, filling the universe
With his life-giving breezes. Day and night,
The King of Serpents on his thousand heads
Upholds the incumbent earth; and even so,
Unceasing toil is aye the lot of kings,
Who, in return, draw nurture from their subjects.

I will therefore deliver my message. [*Walking on and looking about.*] Ah! here comes the King:—

His subjects are his children; through the day,
Like a fond father, to supply their wants,
Incessantly he labors; wearied now,
The monarch seeks seclusion and repose—
E'en as the prince of elephants defies
The sun's fierce heat, and leads the fainting herd
To verdant pastures, ere his wayworn limbs
He yields to rest beneath the cooling shade.

[*Approaching.*] Victory to the King! So please your majesty, some hermits who live in a forest near the Snowy Mountains have arrived here, bringing certain women with them. They have a message to deliver from the sage Kanwa, and desire an audience. I await your Majesty's commands.

KING [*respectfully*].—A message from the sage Kanwa, did you say?

CHAMBERLAIN.—Even so, my liege.

KING.—Tell my domestic priest, Somaráta, to receive the hermits with due honor, according to the prescribed form. He may then himself introduce them into my presence. I will await them in a place suitable for the reception of such holy guests.

CHAMBERLAIN.—Your Majesty's commands shall be obeyed. [*Exit.*

KING [*rising and addressing the Warder*].—Vetravatí, lead the way to the chamber of the consecrated fire.

WARDER.—This way, Sire.

KING [*walking on, with the air of one oppressed by the cares of government*].—People are generally contented and happy when they have gained their desires; but kings have no sooner attained the object of their aspirations than all their troubles begin.

'Tis a fond thought that to attain the end
And object of ambition is to rest;
Success doth only mitigate the fever
Of anxious expectation; soon the fear
Of losing what we have, the constant care
Of guarding it doth weary. Ceaseless toil

Must be the lot of him who with his hands
Supports the canopy that shields his subjects.

TWO HERALDS [*behind the scenes*].—May the King be victorious!

FIRST HERALD.—Honor to him who labors day by day
For the world's weal, forgetful of his own.
Like some tall tree that with its stately head
Endures the solar beam, while underneath
It yields refreshing shelter to the weary.

SECOND HERALD.—Let but the monarch wield his threatening rod
And e'en the guilty tremble; at his voice
The rebel spirit cowers; his grateful subjects
Acknowledge him their guardian; rich and poor
Hail him a faithful friend, a loving kinsman.

KING.—Weary as I was before, this complimentary address has refreshed me. [*Walks on.*

WARDER.—Here is the terrace of the hallowed fire-chamber, and yonder stands the cow that yields the milk for the oblations. The sacred enclosure has been recently purified, and looks clean and beautiful. Ascend, Sire.

KING [*leans on the shoulders of his attendants, and ascends*]. Vetravatí, what can possibly be the message that the venerable Kanwa has sent me by these hermits?—
Perchance their sacred rites have been disturbed
By demons, or some evil has befallen
The innocent herds, their favorites, that graze
Within the precincts of the hermitage;
Or haply, through my sins, some withering blight
Has nipped the creeping plants that spread their arms
Around the hallowed grove. Such troubled thoughts
Crowd through my mind, and fill me with misgiving.

WARDER.—If you ask my opinion, Sire, I think the hermits merely wish to take an opportunity of testifying their loyalty, and are therefore come to offer homage to your Majesty.

Enter the Hermits, leading Śakoontalá, attended by Gautamí; and, in advance of them, the Chamberlain and the domestic Priest.

CHAMBERLAIN.—This way, reverend sirs, this way.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—O Śáradwata,

'Tis true the monarch lacks no royal grace,
Nor ever swerves from justice; true, his people,
Yea such as in life's humblest walks are found,
Refrain from evil courses; still to me,
A lonely hermit reared in solitude,
This throng appears bewildering, and methinks
I look upon a burning house, whose inmates
Are running to and fro in wild dismay.

ŚÁRADWATA.—It is natural that the first sight of the King's capital should affect you in this manner; my own sensations are very similar.

As one just bathed beholds the man polluted;
As one late purified, the yet impure:—
As one awake looks on the yet unwakened;
Or as the freeman gazes on the thrall,
So I regard this crowd of pleasure-seekers.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*feeling a quivering sensation in her right eye-lid, and suspecting a bad omen*].—Alas! what means this throbbing of my right eye-lid?

GAUTAMÍ.—Heaven avert the evil omen, my child! May the guardian deities of thy husband's family convert it into a sign of good fortune! [*Walks on.*

PRIEST [*pointing to the King*].—Most reverend sirs, there stands the protector of the four classes of the people; the guardian of the four orders of the priesthood. He has just left the judgment-seat, and is waiting for you. Behold him!

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Great Bráhman, we are happy in thinking that the King's power is exerted for the protection of all classes of his subjects. We have not come as petitioners—we have the fullest confidence in the generosity of his nature.

The loftiest trees bend humbly to the ground
Beneath the teeming burden of their fruit;
High in the vernal sky the pregnant clouds
Suspend their stately course, and hanging low,

Scatter their sparkling treasures o'er the earth:—
And such is true benevolence; the good
Are never rendered arrogant by riches.

WARDER.—So please your Majesty, I judge from the placid countenance of the hermits that they have no alarming message to deliver.

KING [*looking at Sakoontalá*].—But the lady there——
Who can she be, whose form of matchless grace
Is half concealed beneath her flowing veil?
Among the sombre hermits she appears
Like a fresh bud 'mid sear and yellow leaves.

WARDER.—So please your Majesty, my curiosity is also roused, but no conjecture occurs to my mind. This at least is certain, that she deserves to be looked at more closely.

KING.—True; but it is not right to gaze at another man's wife.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*placing her hand on her bosom. Aside*].—O my heart, why this throbbing? Remember thy lord's affection, and take courage.

PRIEST [*advancing*].—These holy men have been received with all due honor. One of them has now a message to deliver from his spiritual superior. Will your Majesty deign to hear it?

KING.—I am all attention.

HERMITS [*extending their hands*].—Victory to the King!

KING.—Accept my respectful greeting.

HERMITS.—May the desires of your soul be accomplished!

KING.—I trust no one is molesting you in the prosecution of your religious rites.

HERMITS.—Who dares disturb our penitential rites
When thou art our protector? Can the night
Prevail to cast her shadows o'er the earth
While the sun's beams irradiate the sky?

KING.—Such, indeed, is the very meaning of my title—"Defender of the Just." I trust the venerable Kanwa is in good health. The world is interested in his well-being.

HERMITS.—Holy men have health and prosperity in their own power. He bade us greet your Majesty, and, after kind inquiries, deliver this message.

KING.—Let me hear his commands.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—He bade us say that he feels happy in giving his

sanction to the marriage which your Majesty contracted with this lady, his daughter, privately and by mutual agreement. Because

By us thou art esteemed the most illustrious
Of noble husbands; and Śakoontalá
Virtue herself in human form revealed.
Great Brahmá hath in equal yoke united
A bride unto a husband worthy of her:—
Henceforth let none make blasphemous complaint
That he is pleased with ill-assorted unions.

Since, therefore, she expects soon to be the mother of thy child, receive her into thy palace, that she may perform, in conjunction with thee, the ceremonies prescribed by religion on such an occasion.

GAUTAMÍ.—So please your Majesty, I would add a few words: but why should I intrude my sentiments when an opportunity of speaking my mind has never been allowed me?

She took no counsel with her kindred; thou
Didst not confer with thine, but all alone
Didst solemnize thy nuptials with thy wife.
Together, then, hold converse; let us leave you.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—Ah! how I tremble for my lord's reply.

KING.—What strange proposal is this?

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—His words are fire to me.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—What do I hear? Dost thou, then, hesitate? Monarch, thou art well acquainted with the ways of the world, and knowest that

A wife, however virtuous and discreet,
If she live separate from her wedded lord,
Though under shelter of her parent's roof,
Is mark for vile suspicion. Let her dwell
Beside her husband, though he hold her not
In his affection. So her kinsmen will it.

KING.—Do you really mean to assert that I ever married this lady?

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*despondingly. Aside*].—O my heart, thy worst misgivings are confirmed.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Is it becoming in a monarch to depart from the rules of justice, because he repents of his engagements?

KING.—I cannot answer a question which is based on a mere fabrication.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Such inconstancy is fortunately not common, excepting in men intoxicated by power.

KING.—Is that remark aimed at me?

GAUTAMÍ.—Be not ashamed, my daughter. Let me remove thy veil for a little space. Thy husband will then recognize thee. [*Removes her veil.*

KING [*gazing at Śakoontalá. Aside*].—What charms are here revealed before mine eyes!

Truly no blemish mars the symmetry
Of that fair form; yet can I ne'er believe
She is my wedded wife; and like a bee
That circles round the flower whose nectared cup
Teems with the dew of morning, I must pause
Ere eagerly I taste the proffered sweetness.

[*Remains wrapped in thought.*

WARDER.—How admirably does our royal master's behavior prove his regard for justice! Who else would hesitate for a moment when good fortune offered for his acceptance a form of such rare beauty?

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Great King, why art thou silent?

KING.—Holy men, I have revolved the matter in my mind; but the more I think of it, the less able am I to recollect that I ever contracted an alliance with this lady. What answer, then, can I possibly give you when I do not believe myself to be her husband, and I plainly see that she is soon to become a mother?

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—Woe! woe! Is our very marriage to be called in question by my own husband? Ah me! is this to be the end of all my bright visions of wedded happiness?

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Beware!

Beware how thou insult the holy Sage!
Remember how he generously allowed
Thy secret union with his foster-child;
And how, when thou didst rob him of his treasure,
He sought to furnish thee excuse, when rather
He should have cursed thee for a ravisher.

ŚÁRADWATA.—Śárngarava, speak to him no more. Śakoontalá, our part is performed; we have said all we had to say, and the King has replied in the manner thou hast heard. It is now thy turn to give him convincing evidence of thy marriage.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—Since his feeling towards me has undergone a complete revolution, what will it avail to revive old recollections? One thing is clear—I shall soon have to mourn my own widowhood. [*Aloud.*] My revered husband—— [*Stops short.*] But no—I dare not address thee by this title, since thou hast refused to acknowledge our union. Noble descendant of Puru! It is not worthy of thee to betray an innocent-minded girl, and disown her in such terms, after having so lately and so solemnly plighted thy vows to her in the hermitage.

KING [*stopping his ears*].—I will hear no more. Be such a crime far from my thoughts!

What evil spirit can possess thee, lady,
That thou dost seek to sully my good name
By base aspersions? like a swollen torrent,
That, leaping from its narrow bed, o'erthrows
The tree upon its bank, and strives to blend
Its turbid waters with the crystal stream?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—If, then, thou really believest me to be the wife of another, and thy present conduct proceeds from some cloud that obscures thy recollection, I will easily convince thee by this token.

KING.—An excellent idea!

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*feeling for the ring*].—Alas! alas! woe is me! There is no ring on my finger!

[*Looks with anguish at Gautamí.*

GAUTAMÍ.—The ring must have slipped off when thou wast in the act of offering homage to the holy water of Śachí's sacred pool, near Śakrávatára.

KING [*smiling*].—People may well talk of the readiness of woman's invention! Here is an instance of it.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Say, rather, of the omnipotence of fate. I will mention another circumstance, which may yet convince thee.

KING.—By all means let me hear it at once.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—One day, while we were seated in a jasmine bower, thou didst pour into the hollow of thine hand some water, sprinkled by a recent shower in the cup of a lotus blossom——

KING.—I am listening; proceed.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—At that instant, my adopted child, the little

fawn, with soft, long eyes, came running towards us. Upon which, before tasting the water thyself, thou didst kindly offer some to the little creature, saying fondly—"Drink first, gentle fawn." But she could not be induced to drink from the hand of a stranger; though immediately afterwards, when I took the water in my own hand, she drank with perfect confidence. Then, with a smile, thou didst say—"Every creature confides naturally in its own kind. You are both inhabitants of the same forest, and have learnt to trust each other."

KING.—Voluptuaries may allow themselves to be seduced from the path of duty by falsehoods such as these, expressed in honeyed words.

GAUTAMÍ.—Speak not thus, illustrious Prince. This lady was brought up in a hermitage, and has never learnt deceit.

KING.—Holy matron,

E'en in untutored brutes, the female sex
Is marked by inborn subtlety—much more
In beings gifted with intelligence.
The wily Köil, ere towards the sky
She wings her sportive flight, commits her eggs
To other nests, and artfully consigns
The rearing of her little ones to strangers.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*angrily*].—Dishonorable man, thou judgest of others by thine own evil heart. Thou, at least, art unrivalled in perfidy, and standest alone—a base deceiver in the garb of virtue and religion—like a deep pit whose yawning mouth is concealed by smiling flowers.

KING [*aside*].—Her anger, at any rate, appears genuine, and makes me almost doubt whether I am in the right. For, indeed,

When I had vainly searched my memory,
And so with stern severity denied
The fabled story of our secret loves,
Her brows, that met before in graceful curves,
Like the arched weapon of the god of love,
Seemed by her frown dissevered; while the fire
Of sudden anger kindled in her eyes.

[*Aloud.*] My good lady, Dushyanta's character is well-known to all. I comprehend not your meaning.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Well do I deserve to be thought a harlot for

having, in the innocence of my heart, and out of the confidence I reposed in a Prince of Puru's race, intrusted my honor to a man whose mouth distils honey, while his heart is full of poison.

[*Covers her face with her mantle, and bursts into tears.*

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Thus is it that burning remorse must ever follow rash actions which might have been avoided, and for which one has only one's self to blame.

Not hastily should marriage be contracted,
And specially in secret. Many a time,
In hearts that know not each the other's fancies,
Fond love is changed into most bitter hate.

KING.—How now! Do you give credence to this woman rather than to me, that you heap such accusations on me?

ŚÁRNGARAVA [*sarcastically*].—That would be too absurd, certainly. You have heard the proverb—

Hold in contempt the innocent words of those
Who from their infancy have known no guile:—
But trust the treacherous counsels of the man
Who makes a very science of deceit.

KING.—Most veracious Bráhman, grant that you are in the right, what end would be gained by betraying this lady?

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Ruin.

KING.—No one will believe that a Prince of Puru's race would seek to ruin others or himself.

ŚÁRADWATA.—This altercation is idle, Śárngarava. We have executed the commission of our preceptor; come, let us return. [*To the King.*

Śakoontalá is certainly thy bride;
Receive her or reject her, she is thine.
Do with her, King, according to thy pleasure—
The husband o'er the wife is absolute.

Go on before us, Gautamí. [*They move away.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—What! is it not enough to have been betrayed by this perfidious man? Must you also forsake me, regardless of my tears and lamentations?

[*Attempts to follow them.*

GAUTAMÍ [*stopping*].—My son Śárngarava, see, Śakoontalá is following us, and with tears implores us not to leave her. Alas! poor child, what will she do here with a cruel husband who casts her from him?

ŚÁRNGARAVA [*turning angrily towards her*].—Wilful woman, dost thou seek to be independent of thy lord?

[*Śakoontalá trembles with fear.*

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Śakoontalá!

If thou art really what the King proclaims thee,
How can thy father e'er receive thee back
Into his house and home? but, if thy conscience
Be witness to thy purity of soul,
E'en should thy husband to a handmaid's lot
Condemn thee, thou may'st cheerfully endure it,
When ranked among the number of his household.

Thy duty, therefore, is to stay. As for us, we must return immediately.

KING.—Deceive not the lady, my good hermit, by any such expectations.

The moon expands the lotus of the night,
The rising sun awakes the lily; each
Is with his own contented. Even so
The virtuous man is master of his passions,
And from another's wife averts his gaze.

ŚÁRNGARAVA.—Since thy union with another woman has rendered thee oblivious of thy marriage with Śakoontalá, whence this fear of losing thy character for constancy and virtue?

KING [*to the Priest*].—You must counsel me, revered sir, as to my course of action. Which of the two evils involves the greater or less sin?

Whether by some dark veil my mind be clouded,
Or this designing woman speak untruly,
I know not. Tell me, must I rather be
The base disowner of my wedded wife,
Or the defiling and defiled adulterer?

PRIEST [*after deliberation*].—You must take an intermediate course.

KING.—What course, revered sir? Tell me at once.

PRIEST.—I will provide an asylum for the lady in my own house until the birth of her child; and my reason, if you ask me, is this. Soothsayers have predicted that your first-born will have universal dominion. Now, if the hermit's daughter bring forth a son with the discus or mark of empire in the lines of his hand, you must admit her im-

mediately into your royal apartments with great rejoicings; if not, then determine to send her back as soon as possible to her father.

KING.—I bow to the decision of my spiritual adviser.

PRIEST.—Daughter, follow me.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—O divine earth, open and receive me into thy bosom!

[*Exit Sakoontalá weeping, with the Priest and the Hermits. The King remains absorbed in thinking of her, though the curse still clouds his recollection.*

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—A miracle! a miracle!

KING [*listening*].—What has happened now?

PRIEST [*entering with an air of astonishment*].—Great Prince, a stupendous prodigy has just occurred!

KING.—What is it?

PRIEST.—May it please your Majesty, so soon as Kanwa's pupils had departed,

Śakoontalá, her eyes all bathed in tears,
With outstretched arms bewailed her cruel fate——

KING.—Well, well, what happened then?

PRIEST.—When suddenly a shining apparition,
In female shape, descended from the skies,
Near the nymphs' pool, and bore her up to heaven.

[*All remain motionless with astonishment.*

KING.—My good priest, from the very first I declined having anything to do with this matter. It is now all over, and we can never, by our conjectures, unravel the mystery; let it rest; go, seek repose.

PRIEST [*looking at the King*].—Be it so. Victory to the King!

[*Exit.*

KING.—Vetravatí, I am tired out; lead the way to the bed-chamber.

WARDER.—This way, Sire. [*They move away.*

KING.—Do what I will, I cannot call to mind
That I did e'er espouse the sage's daughter—
Therefore I have disowned her; yet 'tis strange
How painfully my agitated heart
Bears witness to the truth of her assertion,
And makes me credit her against my judgment.

[*Exeunt.*

PRELUDE TO ACT SIXTH

Scene.—A Street

Enter the King's brother-in-law as Superintendent of the city police; and with him two Constables, dragging a poor fisherman, who has his hands tied behind his back.

BOTH THE CONSTABLES [*striking the prisoner*].—Take that for a rascally thief that you are; and now tell us, sirrah, where you found this ring—aye, the King's own signet-ring. See, here is the royal name engraved on the setting of the jewel.

FISHERMAN [*with a gesture of alarm*].—Mercy! kind sirs, mercy! I did not steal it; indeed I did not.

FIRST CONSTABLE.—Oh! then I suppose the King took you for some fine Bráhman, and made you a present of it?

FISHERMAN.—Only hear me. I am but a poor fisherman, living at Sakrávatára——

SECOND CONSTABLE.—Scoundrel, who ever asked you, pray, for a history of your birth and parentage?

SUPERINTENDENT [*to one of the Constables*].—Súchaka, let the fellow tell his own story from the beginning. Don't interrupt him.

BOTH CONSTABLES.—As you please, master. Go on, then, sirrah, and say what you've got to say.

FISHERMAN.—You see in me a poor man, who supports his family by catching fish with nets, hooks, and the like.

SUPERINTENDENT [*laughing*].—A most refined occupation, certainly!

FISHERMAN.—Blame me not for it, master.

The father's occupation, though despised
By others, casts no shame upon the son,
And he should not forsake it. Is the priest
Who kills the animal for sacrifice

Therefore deemed cruel? Sure a lowborn man
May, though a fisherman, be tender-hearted.

SUPERINTENDENT.—Well, well; go on with your story.

FISHERMAN.—One day I was cutting open a large carp I had just hooked, when the sparkle of a jewel caught my eye, and what should I find in the fish's maw but that ring! Soon afterwards, when I was offering it for sale, I was seized by your honors. Now you know everything. Whether you kill me, or whether you let me go, this is the true account of how the ring came into my possession.

SUPERINTENDENT [*to one of the Constables*].—Well, Jánuka, the rascal emits such a fishy odor that I have no doubt of his being a fisherman; but we must inquire a little more closely into this queer story about the finding of the ring. Come, we'll take him before the King's household.

BOTH CONSTABLES.—Very good, master. Get on with you, you cutpurse. [*All move on.*

SUPERINTENDENT.—Now attend, Súchaka; keep you guard here at the gate; and hark ye, sirrahs, take good care your prisoner does not escape, while I go in and lay the whole story of the discovery of this ring before the King in person. I will soon return and let you know his commands.

CONSTABLE.—Go in, master, by all means; and may you find favor in the King's sight! [*Exit Superintendent.*

FIRST CONSTABLE [*after an interval*].—I say, Jánuka, the Superintendent is a long time away.

SECOND CONSTABLE.—Aye, aye; kings are not to be got at so easily. Folks must bide the proper opportunity.

FIRST CONSTABLE.—Jánuka, my fingers itch to strike the first blow at this royal victim here. We must kill him with all the honors, you know. I long to begin binding the flowers round his head.

[*Pretends to strike a blow at the fisherman.*

FISHERMAN.—Your honor surely will not put an innocent man to a cruel death.

SECOND CONSTABLE [*looking*].—There's our Superintendent at last, I declare. See, he is coming towards us with a paper in his hand. We shall soon know the King's command; so prepare, my fine fellow, either to become food

for the vultures, or to make acquaintance with some hungry cur.

SUPERINTENDENT [*entering*].—Ho, there, Súchaka! set the fisherman at liberty, I tell you. His story about the ring is all correct.

SÚCHAKA.—Oh! very good, sir; as you please.

SECOND CONSTABLE.—The fellow had one foot in hell, and now here he is in the land of the living. [*Releases him.*

FISHERMAN [*bowing to the Superintendent*].—Now, master, what think you of my way of getting a livelihood?

SUPERINTENDENT.—Here, my good man, the King desired me to present you with this purse. It contains a sum of money equal to the full value of the ring. [*Gives him the money.*

FISHERMAN [*taking it and bowing*].—His Majesty does me too great honor.

SÚCHAKA.—You may well say so. He might as well have taken you from the gallows to seat you on his state elephant.

JÁNUKA.—Master, the King must value the ring very highly, or he would never have sent such a sum of money to this ragamuffin.

SUPERINTENDENT.—I don't think he prizes it as a costly jewel so much as a memorial of some person he tenderly loves. The moment it was shown to him he became much agitated, though in general he conceals his feelings.

SÚCHAKA.—Then you must have done a great service——

JÁNUKA.—Yes, to this husband of a fish-wife.

[*Looks enviously at the fisherman.*

FISHERMAN.—Here's half the money for you, my masters. It will serve to purchase the flowers you spoke of, if not to buy me your good-will.

JÁNUKA.—Well, now, that's just as it should be.

SUPERINTENDENT.—My good fisherman, you are an excellent fellow, and I begin to feel quite a regard for you. Let us seal our first friendship over a glass of good liquor. Come along to the next wine-shop and we'll drink your health.

ALL.—By all means. [*Exeunt.*

ACT SIXTH

Scene.—The Garden of the Palace

The nymph Sánumatí is seen descending in a celestial car.

SÁNUMATÍ.—Behold me just arrived from attending in my proper turn at the nymphs' pool, where I have left the other nymphs to perform their ablutions, whilst I seek to ascertain, with my own eyes, how it fares with King Dushyanta. My connection with the nymph Menaká has made her daughter Śakoontalá dearer to me than my own flesh and blood; and Menaká it was who charged me with this errand on her daughter's behalf. [*Looking round in all directions.*] How is it that I see no preparations in the King's household for celebrating the great vernal festival? I could easily discover the reason by my divine faculty of meditation; but respect must be shown to the wishes of my friend. How then shall I arrive at the truth? I know what I will do. I will become invisible, and place myself near those two maidens who are tending the plants in the garden. [*Descends and takes her station.*

Enter a Maiden, who stops in front of a mango-tree and gazes at the blossom. Another Maiden is seen behind her.

FIRST MAIDEN.—Hail to thee, lovely harbinger of spring!
The varied radiance of thy opening flowers
Is welcome to my sight. I bid thee hail,
Sweet mango, soul of this enchanting season.

SECOND MAIDEN.—Parabaitiká, what are you saying there to yourself?

FIRST MAIDEN.—Dear Madhukariká, am I not named after the Köil?[9] and does not the Köil sing for joy at the first appearance of the mango-blossom?

[9] The Köil is the Indian cuckoo. It is sometimes called Parabhrita (nourished by another) because the female is known to leave her eggs in the nest of the crow to be hatched. The bird is a great favorite with the Indian poets, as the nightingale with Europeans.

SECOND MAIDEN [*approaching hastily, with transport*].—What! is spring really come?

FIRST MAIDEN.—Yes, indeed, Madhukariká, and with it the season of joy, love, and song.

SECOND MAIDEN.—Let me lean upon you, dear, while I stand on tip-toe and pluck a blossom of the mango, that I may present it as an offering to the god of love.

FIRST MAIDEN.—Provided you let me have half the reward which the god will bestow in return.

SECOND MAIDEN.—To be sure you shall, and that without asking. Are we not one in heart and soul, though divided in body? [*Leans on her friend and plucks a mango-blossom.*] Ah! here is a bud just bursting into flower. It diffuses a delicious perfume, though not yet quite expanded. [*Joining her hands reverentially.*

God of the bow, who with spring's choicest flowers
Dost point thy five unerring shafts; to thee
I dedicate this blossom; let it serve
To barb thy truest arrow; be its mark
Some youthful heart that pines to be beloved.

[*Throws down a mango-blossom.*

CHAMBERLAIN [*entering in a hurried manner, angrily*].—Hold there, thoughtless woman. What are you about, breaking off those mango-blossoms, when the King has forbidden the celebration of the spring festival?

BOTH MAIDENS [*alarmed*].—Pardon us, kind sir, we have heard nothing of it.

CHAMBERLAIN.—You have heard nothing of it? Why, all the vernal plants and shrubs, and the very birds that lodge in their branches, show more respect to the King's order than you do.

Yon mango-blossoms, though long since expanded,
Gather no down upon their tender crests;
The flower still lingers in the amaranth,
Imprisoned in its bud; the tuneful Köil,
Though winter's chilly dews be overpast,
Suspends the liquid volume of his song
Scarce uttered in his throat; e'en Love, dismayed,
Restores the half-drawn arrow to his quiver.

BOTH MAIDENS.—The mighty power of King Dushyanta is not to be disputed.

FIRST MAIDEN.—It is but a few days since Mitrávasu, the king's brother-in-law, sent us to wait upon his Majesty; and, during the whole of our sojourn here, we have been intrusted with the charge of the royal pleasure-grounds. We are therefore strangers in this place, and heard nothing of the order until you informed us of it.

CHAMBERLAIN.—Well then, now you know it, take care you don't continue your preparations.

BOTH MAIDENS.—But tell us, kind sir, why has the King prohibited the usual festivities? We are curious to hear, if we may.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—Men are naturally fond of festive entertainments. There must be some good reason for the prohibition.

CHAMBERLAIN.—The whole affair is now public; why should I not speak of it! Has not the gossip about the King's rejection of Śakoontalá reached your ears yet?

BOTH MAIDENS.—Oh yes, we heard the story from the King's brother-in-law, as far, at least, as the discovery of the ring.

CHAMBERLAIN.—Then there is little more to tell you. As soon as the King's memory was restored by the sight of his own ring, he exclaimed, " Yes, it is all true. I remember now my secret marriage with Śakoontalá. When I repudiated her, I had lost my recollection." Ever since that moment, he has yielded himself a prey to the bitterest remorse.

He loathes his former pleasures; he rejects
The daily homage of his ministers.
On his lone couch he tosses to and fro,
Courting repose in vain. Whene'er he meets
The ladies of his palace, and would fain
Address them with politeness, he confounds
Their names; or, calling them " Śakoontalá,"
Is straightway silent and abashed with shame.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—To me this account is delightful.

CHAMBERLAIN.—In short, the King is so completely out of his mind that the festival has been prohibited.

BOTH MAIDENS.—Perfectly right.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—The King! the King! This way, Sire, this way.

CHAMBERLAIN [*listening*].—Oh! here comes his majesty in this direction. Pass on, maidens; attend to your duties.

BOTH MAIDENS.—We will, sir. [*Exeunt.*

Enter King Dushyanta, dressed in deep mourning, attended by his Jester, Máthavya, and preceded by Vetravatí.

CHAMBERLAIN [*gazing at the King*].—Well, noble forms are certainly pleasing, under all varieties of outward circumstances. The King's person is as charming as ever, notwithstanding his sorrow of mind.

Though but a single golden bracelet spans
His wasted arm; though costly ornaments
Have given place to penitential weeds;
Though oft-repeated sighs have blanched his lips,
And robbed them of their bloom; though sleepless care
And carking thought have dimmed his beaming eye;
Yet does his form, by its inherent lustre,
Dazzle the gaze; and, like a priceless gem
Committed to some cunning polisher,
Grow more effulgent by the loss of substance.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside. Looking at the King*].—Now that I have seen him, I can well understand why Śakoontalá should pine after such a man, in spite of his disdainful rejection of her.

KING [*walking slowly up and down, in deep thought*].—

When fatal lethargy o'erwhelmed my soul,
My loved one strove to rouse me, but in vain:—
And now when I would fain in slumber deep
Forget myself, full soon remorse doth wake me.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—My poor Śakoontalá's sufferings are very similar.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*].—He is taken with another attack of this odious Śakoontalá fever. How shall we ever cure him?

CHAMBERLAIN [*approaching*].—Victory to the King! Great Prince, the royal pleasure-grounds have been put in order. Your Majesty can resort to them for exercise and amusement whenever you think proper.

KING.—Vetravatí, tell the worthy Piśuna, my prime minister, from me, that I am so exhausted by want of sleep that I cannot sit on the judgment-seat to-day. If any case of

importance be brought before the tribunal he must give it his best attention, and inform me of the circumstances by letter.

VETRAVATÍ.—Your Majesty's commands shall be obeyed. [*Exit.*

KING [*to the Chamberlain*].—And you, Vátáyana, may go about your own affairs.

CHAMBERLAIN.—I will, Sire. [*Exit.*

MÁTHAVYA.—Now that you have rid yourself of these troublesome fellows, you can enjoy the delightful coolness of your pleasure-grounds without interruption.

KING.—Ah! my dear friend, there is an old adage—"When affliction has a mind to enter, she will find a crevice somewhere"—and it is verified in me.

Scarce is my soul delivered from the cloud
That darkened its remembrance of the past,
When lo! the heart-born deity of love
With yonder blossom of the mango barbs
His keenest shaft, and aims it at my breast.

MÁTHAVYA.—Well, then, wait a moment; I will soon demolish Master Káma's arrow with a cut of my cane.

[*Raises his stick and strikes off the mango-blossom.*

KING [*smiling*].—That will do. I see very well the god of Love is not a match for a Bráhman. And now, my dear friend, where shall I sit down, that I may enchant my sight by gazing on the twining plants, which seem to remind me of the graceful shape of my beloved?

MÁTHAVYA.—Do you not remember? you told Chaturiká you should pass the heat of the day in the jasmine bower; and commanded her to bring the likeness of your queen Śakoontalá, sketched with your own hand.

KING.—True. The sight of her picture will refresh my soul. Lead the way to the arbor.

MÁTHAVYA.—This way, Sire.

[*Both move on, followed by Sánumatí.*

MÁTHAVYA.—Here we are at the jasmine bower. Look, it has a marble seat, and seems to bid us welcome with its offerings of delicious flowers. You have only to enter and sit down. [*Both enter and seat themselves.*

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—I will lean against these young jasmines.

I can easily, from behind them, glance at my friend's picture, and will then hasten to inform her of her husband's ardent affection. [*Stands leaning against the creepers.*

KING.—Oh! my dear friend, how vividly all the circumstances of my union with Śakoontalá present themselves to my recollection at this moment! But tell me now how it was that, between the time of my leaving her in the hermitage and my subsequent rejection of her, you never breathed her name to me! True, you were not by my side when I disowned her; but I had confided to you the story of my love and you were acquainted with every particular. Did it pass out of your mind as it did out of mine?

MÁTHAVYA.—No, no; trust me for that. But, if you remember, when you had finished telling me about it, you added that I was not to take the story in earnest, for that you were not really in love with a country girl, but were only jesting; and I was dull and thick-headed enough to believe you. But so fate decreed, and there is no help for it.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—Exactly.

KING [*after deep thought*].—My dear friend, suggest some relief for my misery.

MÁTHAVYA.—Come, come, cheer up; why do you give way? Such weakness is unworthy of you. Great men never surrender themselves to uncontrolled grief. Do not mountains remain unshaken even in a gale of wind?

KING.—How can I be otherwise than inconsolable, when I call to mind the agonized demeanor of the dear one on the occasion of my disowning her?

When cruelly I spurned her from my presence,
She fain had left me; but the young recluse,
Stern as the Sage, and with authority
As from his saintly master, in a voice
That brooked not contradiction, bade her stay.
Then through her pleading eyes, bedimmed with tears,
She cast on me one long reproachful look,
Which like a poisoned shaft torments me still.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—Alas! such is the force of self-reproach following a rash action. But his anguish only rejoices me.

MÁTHAVYA.—An idea has just struck me. I should not wonder if some celestial being had carried her off to heaven.

KING.—Very likely. Who else would have dared to lay a

finger on a wife, the idol of her husband? It is said that Menaká, the nymph of heaven, gave her birth. The suspicion has certainly crossed my mind that some of her celestial companions may have taken her to their own abode.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—His present recollection of every circumstance of her history does not surprise me so much as his former forgetfulness.

MÁTHAVYA.—If that's the case, you will be certain to meet her before long.

KING.—Why?

MÁTHAVYA.—No father and mother can endure to see a daughter suffering the pain of separation from her husband.

KING.—Oh! my dear Máthavya,

Was it a dream? or did some magic dire,
Dulling my senses with a strange delusion,
O'ercome my spirit? or did destiny,
Jealous of my good actions, mar their fruit,
And rob me of their guerdon? It is past,
Whate'er the spell that bound me. Once again
Am I awake, but only to behold
The precipice o'er which my hopes have fallen.

MÁTHAVYA.—Do not despair in this manner. Is not this very ring a proof that what has been lost may be unexpectedly found?

KING [*gazing at the ring*].—Ah! this ring, too, has fallen from a station which it will not easily regain, and deserves all my sympathy.

O gem, deserved the punishment we suffer,
And equal is the merit of our works,
When such our common doom. Thou didst enjoy
The thrilling contact of those slender fingers,
Bright as the dawn; and now how changed thy lot!

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—Had it found its way to the hand of any other person, then indeed its fate would have been deplorable.

MÁTHAVYA.—Pray, how did the ring ever come upon her hand at all?

SÁNUMATÍ.—I myself am curious to know.

KING.—You shall hear. When I was leaving my beloved Sakoontalá that I might return to my own capital, she said

to me, with tears in her eyes, "How long will it be ere my lord send for me to his palace and make me his queen?"

MÁTHAVYA.—Well, what was your reply?

KING.—Then I placed the ring on her finger, and thus addressed her—

Repeat each day one letter of the name
Engraven on this gem; ere thou hast reckoned
The tale of syllables, my minister
Shall come to lead thee to thy husband's palace.

But, hard-hearted man that I was, I forgot to fulfil my promise, owing to the infatuation that took possession of me.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—A pleasant arrangement! Fate, however, ordained that the appointment should not be kept.

MÁTHAVYA.—But how did the ring contrive to pass into the stomach of that carp which the fisherman caught and was cutting up?

KING.—It must have slipped from my Śakoontalá's hand, and fallen into the stream of the Ganges, while she was offering homage to the water of Śachí's holy pool.

MÁTHAVYA.—Very likely.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—Hence it happened, I suppose, that the King, always fearful of committing the least injustice, came to doubt his marriage with my poor Śakoontalá. But why should affection so strong as his stand in need of any token of recognition?

KING.—Let me now address a few words of reproof to this ring.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*].—He is going stark mad, I verily believe.

KING.—Hear me, thou dull and undiscerning bauble!

For so it argues thee, that thou couldst leave
The slender fingers of her hand, to sink
Beneath the waters. Yet what marvel is it
That thou shouldst lack discernment? let me rather
Heap curses on myself, who, though endowed
With reason, yet rejected her I loved.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*].—And so, I suppose, I must stand here to be devoured by hunger, whilst he goes on in this sentimental strain.

KING.—O forsaken one, unjustly banished from my presence,

take pity on thy slave, whose heart is consumed by the fire of remorse, and return to my sight.

Enter Chaturiká hurriedly, with a picture in her hand.

CHATURIKÁ.—Here is the Queen's portrait.

[*Shows the picture.*

MÁTHAVYA.—Excellent, my dear friend, excellent! The imitation of nature is perfect, and the attitude of the figures is really charming. They stand out in such bold relief that the eye is quite deceived.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—A most artistic performance! I admire the King's skill, and could almost believe that Śakoontalá herself was before me.

KING.—I own 'tis not amiss, though it portrays
But feebly her angelic loveliness.
Aught less than perfect is depicted falsely,
And fancy must supply the imperfection.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—A very just remark from a modest man, whose affection is exaggerated by the keenness of his remorse.

MÁTHAVYA.—Tell me—I see three female figures drawn on the canvas, and all of them beautiful; which of the three is her Majesty, Śakoontalá?

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—If he cannot distinguish her from the others, the simpleton might as well have no eyes in his head.

KING.—Which should you imagine to be intended for her?

MÁTHAVYA.—She who is leaning, apparently a little tired, against the stem of that mango-tree, the tender leaves of which glitter with the water she has poured upon them. Her arms are gracefully extended; her face is somewhat flushed with the heat; and a few flowers have escaped from her hair, which has become unfastened, and hangs in loose tresses about her neck. That must be the queen Śakoontalá, and the others, I presume, are her two attendants.

KING.—I congratulate you on your discernment. Behold the proof of my passion;
My finger, burning with the glow of love,
Has left its impress on the painted tablet;

While here and there, alas! a scalding tear
Has fallen on the cheek and dimmed its brightness.
Chaturiká, the garden in the background of the picture is only half-painted. Go, fetch the brush that I may finish it.

CHATURIKÁ.—Worthy Máthavya, have the kindness to hold the picture until I return.

KING.—Nay, I will hold it myself.

[*Takes the picture. Exit Chaturiká.*

KING.—My loved one came but lately to my presence
And offered me herself, but in my folly
I spurned the gift, and now I fondly cling
To her mere image; even as a madman
Would pass the waters of the gushing stream,
And thirst for airy vapors of the desert.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*].—He has been fool enough to forego the reality for the semblance, the substance for the shadow. [*Aloud.*] Tell us, I pray, what else remains to be painted.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—He longs, no doubt, to delineate some favorite spot where my dear Śakoontalá delighted to ramble.

KING.—You shall hear——
I wish to see the Máliní portrayed,
Its tranquil course by banks of sand impeded—
Upon the brink a pair of swans: beyond,
The hills adjacent to Himálaya,
Studded with deer; and, near the spreading shade
Of some large tree, where 'mid the branches hang
The hermits' vests of bark, a tender doe,
Rubbing its downy forehead on the horn
Of a black antelope, should be depicted.

MÁTHAVYA [*aside*].—Pooh! if I were he, I would fill up the vacant spaces with a lot of grizzly-bearded old hermits.

KING.—My dear Máthavya, there is still a part of Śakoontalá's dress which I purposed to draw, but find I have omitted.

MÁTHAVYA.—What is that?

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—Something suitable, I suppose, to the simple attire of a young and beautiful girl dwelling in a forest.

KING.—A sweet Śirísha blossom should be twined
Behind her ear, its perfumed crest depending

Towards her cheek; and, resting on her bosom,
A lotus-fibre necklace, soft and bright
As an autumnal moon-beam, should be traced.

MÁTHAVYA.—Pray, why does the Queen cover her lips with the tips of her fingers, bright as the blossom of a lily, as if she were afraid of something? [*Looking more closely.*] Oh! I see; a vagabond bee, intent on thieving the honey of flowers, has mistaken her mouth for a rose-bud, and is trying to settle upon it.

KING.—A bee! drive off the impudent insect, will you?

MÁTHAVYA.—That's your business. Your royal prerogative gives you power over all offenders.

KING.—Very true. Listen to me, thou favorite guest of flowering plants; why give thyself the trouble of hovering here?

See where thy partner sits on yonder flower,
And waits for thee ere she will sip its dew.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—A most polite way of warning him off!

MÁTHAVYA.—You'll find the obstinate creature is not to be sent about his business so easily as you think.

KING.—Dost thou presume to disobey? Now hear me—

An thou but touch the lips of my beloved,
Sweet as the opening blossom, whence I quaffed
In happier days love's nectar, I will place thee
Within the hollow of yon lotus cup,
And there imprison thee for thy presumption.

MÁTHAVYA.—He must be bold indeed not to show any fear when you threaten him with such an awful punishment. [*Smiling, aside.*] He is stark mad, that's clear; and I believe, by keeping him company, I am beginning to talk almost as wildly. [*Aloud.*] Look, it is only a painted bee.

KING.—Painted? impossible!

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—Even I did not perceive it; how much less should he?

KING.—Oh! my dear friend, why were you so ill-natured as to tell me the truth?

While, all entranced, I gazed upon her picture,
My loved one seemed to live before my eyes,
Till every fibre of my being thrilled
With rapturous emotion. Oh! 'twas cruel

To dissipate the day-dream, and transform
The blissful vision to a lifeless image. [*Sheds tears.*

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—Separated lovers are very difficult to please; but he seems more difficult than usual.

KING.—Alas! my dear Máthavya, why am I doomed to be the victim of perpetual disappointment?

Vain is the hope of meeting her in dreams,
For slumber night by night forsakes my couch:
And now that I would fain assuage my grief
By gazing on her portrait here before me,
Tears of despairing love obscure my sight.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—You have made ample amends for the wrong you did Śakoontalá in disowning her.

CHATURIKÁ [*entering*].—Victory to the King! I was coming along with the box of colors in my hand——

KING.—What now?

CHATURIKÁ.—When I met the Queen Vasumatí, attended by Taraliká. She insisted on taking it from me, and declared she would herself deliver it into your Majesty's hands.

MÁTHAVYA.—By what luck did you contrive to escape her?

CHATURIKÁ.—While her maid was disengaging her mantle, which had caught in the branch of a shrub, I ran away.

KING.—Here, my good friend, take the picture and conceal it. My attentions to the Queen have made her presumptuous. She will be here in a minute.

MÁTHAVYA.—Conceal the picture! conceal myself, you mean. [*Getting up and taking the picture.*] The Queen has a bitter draught in store for you, which you will have to swallow as Śiva did the poison at the Deluge. When you are well quit of her, you may send and call me from the Palace of Clouds,[10] where I shall take refuge.

[*Exit, running.*

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—Although the King's affections are transferred to another object, yet he respects his previous attachments. I fear his love must be somewhat fickle.

VETRAVATÍ [*entering with a despatch in her hand*].—Victory to the King!

KING.—Vetravatí, did you observe the Queen Vasumatí coming in this direction?

[10] Palace of King Dushyanta, so-called because it was as lofty as the clouds.

VETRAVATÍ.—I did; but when she saw that I had a despatch in my hand for your Majesty, she turned back.

KING.—The Queen has too much regard for propriety to interrupt me when I am engaged with state-affairs.

VETRAVATÍ.—So please your Majesty, your Prime Minister begs respectfully to inform you that he has devoted much time to the settlement of financial calculations, and only one case of importance has been submitted by the citizens for his consideration. He has made a written report of the facts, and requests your Majesty to cast your eyes over it.

KING.—Hand me the paper. [*Vetravatí delivers it.*

KING [*reading*].—What have we here? "A merchant named Dhanamitra, trading by sea, was lost in a late shipwreck. Though a wealthy trader, he was childless; and the whole of his immense property becomes by law forfeited to the King." So writes the minister. Alas! alas! for his childlessness. But surely, if he was wealthy, he must have had many wives. Let an inquiry be made whether any one of them is expecting to give birth to a child.

VETRAVATÍ.—They say that his wife, the daughter of the foreman of a guild belonging to Ayodhyá, has just completed the ceremonies usual upon such expectations.

KING.—The unborn child has a title to his father's property. Such is my decree. Go, bid my minister proclaim it so.

VETRAVATÍ.—I will, my liege. [*Going.*

KING.—Stay a moment.

VETRAVATÍ.—I am at your Majesty's service.

KING.—Let there be no question whether he may or may have left offspring;

Rather be it proclaimed that whosoe'er
Of King Dushyanta's subjects be bereaved
Of any loved relation, an it be not
That his estates are forfeited for crimes,
Dushyanta will himself to them supply
That kinsman's place in tenderest affection.

VETRAVATÍ.—It shall be so proclaimed.

[*Exit Vetravatí, and reënter after an interval.*

VETRAVATÍ.—Your Majesty's proclamation was received with acclamations of joy, like grateful rain at the right season.

KING [*drawing a deep sigh*].—So then, the property of rich

men, who have no lineal descendants, passes over to a stranger at their decease. And such, alas! must be the fate of the fortunes of the race of Puru at my death; even as when fertile soil is sown with seed at the wrong season.

VETRAVATÍ.—Heaven forbid!

KING.—Fool that I was to reject such happiness when it offered itself for my acceptance!

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—He may well blame his own folly when he calls to mind his treatment of my beloved Śakoontalá.

KING.—Ah! woe is me! when I forsook my wife—

My lawful wife—concealed within her breast
There lay my second self, a child unborn,
Hope of my race, e'en as the choicest fruit
Lies hidden in the bosom of the earth.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—There is no fear of your race being cut off for want of a son.

CHATURIKÁ [*aside to Vetravatí*].—The affair of the merchant's death has quite upset our royal master, and caused him sad distress. Had you not better fetch the worthy Máthavya from the Palace of Clouds to comfort him?

VETRAVATÍ.—A very good idea. [*Exit.*

KING.—Alas! the shades of my forefathers are even now beginning to be alarmed, lest at my death they may be deprived of their funeral libations.

No son remains in King Dushyanta's place
To offer sacred homage to the dead
Of Puru's noble line: my ancestors
Must drink these glistening tears, the last libation
A childless man can ever hope to make them.

[*Falls down in an agony of grief.*

CHATURIKÁ [*looking at him in consternation*].—Great King, compose yourself.

SÁNUMATÍ [*aside*].—Alas! alas! though a bright light is shining near him, he is involved in the blackest darkness, by reason of the veil that obscures his sight. I will now reveal all, and put an end to his misery. But no; I heard the mother of the great Indra, when she was consoling Śakoontalá, say, that the gods will soon bring about a joyful union between husband and wife, being eager for the sacrifice which will be celebrated in their honor on the occasion. I must not anticipate the happy moment,

but will return at once to my dear friend and cheer her with an account of what I have seen and heard.

[*Rises aloft and disappears.*

A Voice [*behind the scenes*].—Help! help! to the rescue!

King [*recovering himself. Listening*].—Ha! I heard a cry of distress, and in Máthavya's voice. What ho there!

Vetravatí [*entering*].—Your friend is in danger; save him, great King.

King.—Who dares insult the worthy Máthavya?

Vetravatí.—Some evil demon, invisible to human eyes, has seized him, and carried him to one of the turrets of the Palace of Clouds.

King [*rising*].—Impossible! Have evil spirits power over my subjects, even in my private apartments? Well, well—

Daily I seem less able to avert
Misfortune from myself, and o'er my actions
Less competent to exercise control;
How can I then direct my subjects' ways,
Or shelter them from tyranny and wrong?

A Voice [*behind the scenes*].—Hallòo there! my dear friend; help! help!

King [*advancing with rapid strides*].—Fear nothing——

The Same Voice [*behind the scenes*].—Fear nothing, indeed! How can I help fearing when some monster is twisting back my neck, and is about to snap it as he would a sugar-cane?

King [*looking round*].—What ho there! my bow.

Slave [*entering with a bow*].—Behold your bow, Sire, and your arm-guard.

[*The king snatches up the bow and arrows.*

Another Voice [*behind the scenes*].—Here, thirsting for thy life-blood, will I slay thee,
As a fierce tiger rends his struggling prey.
Call now thy friend Dushyanta to thy aid;
His bow is mighty to defend the weak;
Yet all its vaunted power shall be as nought.

King [*with fury*].—What! dares he defy me to my face? Hold there, monster! Prepare to die, for your time is come. [*Stringing his bow.*] Vetravati, lead the way to the terrace.

Vetravatí.—This way, Sire. [*They advance in haste.*

KING [*looking on every side*].—How's this? there is nothing to be seen.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—Help! Save me! I can see you, though you cannot see me. I am like a mouse in the claws of a cat; my life is not worth a moment's purchase.

KING.—Avaunt, monster! You may pride yourself on the magic that renders you invisible, but my arrow shall find you out. Thus do I fix a shaft

That shall discern between an impious demon
And a good Bráhman; bearing death to thee,
To him deliverance—even as the swan
Distinguishes the milk from worthless water.

[*Takes aim.*

Enter Mátali, holding Máthavya, whom he releases.

MÁTALI.—Turn thou thy deadly arrows on the demons;
Such is the will of Indra; let thy bow
Be drawn against the enemies of the gods;
But on thy friends cast only looks of favor.

KING [*putting back his arrow*].—What, Mátali! Welcome, most noble charioteer of the mighty Indra.

MÁTHAVYA.—So, here is a monster who thought as little about slaughtering me as if I had been a bullock for sacrifice, and you must e'en greet him with a welcome.

MÁTALI [*smiling*].—Great Prince, hear on what errand Indra sent me into your presence.

KING.—I am all attention.

MÁTALI.—There is a race of giants, the descendants of Kálanemi, whom the gods find difficult to subdue.

KING.—So I have already heard from Nárada.

MÁTALI.—Heaven's mighty lord, who deigns to call thee "friend,"
Appoints thee to the post of highest honor,
As leader of his armies; and commits
The subjugation of this giant brood
To thy resistless arms, e'en as the sun
Leaves the pale moon to dissipate the darkness.
Let your Majesty, therefore, ascend at once the celestial car of Indra; and, grasping your arms, advance to victory.

KING.—The mighty Indra honors me too highly by such a mark of distinction. But tell me, what made you act thus towards my poor friend Máthavya?

MÁTALI.—I will tell you. Perceiving that your Majesty's spirit was completely broken by some distress of mind under which you were laboring, I determined to rouse your energies by moving you to anger. Because

To light a flame, we need but stir the embers;
The cobra, when incensed, extends his head
And springs upon his foe; the bravest men
Display their courage only when provoked.

KING [*aside to Máthavya*].—My dear Máthavya, the commands of the great Indra must not be left unfulfilled. Go you and acquaint my minister, Piśuna, with what has happened, and say to him from me,

Dushyanta to thy care confides his realm—
Protect with all the vigor of thy mind
The interests of my people; while my bow
Is braced against the enemies of heaven.

MÁTHAVYA.—I obey. [*Exit.*

MÁTALI.—Ascend, illustrious Prince.

[*The King ascends the car. Exeunt.*

ACT SEVENTH

Scene.—The Sky

Enter King Dushyanta and Mátali in the car of Indra, moving in the air.

KING.—My good Mátali, it appears to me incredible that I can merit such a mark of distinction for having simply fulfilled the behests of the great Indra.

MÁTALI [*smiling*].—Great Prince, it seems to me that neither of you is satisfied with himself—

You underrate the service you have rendered,
And think too highly of the god's reward:
He deems it scarce sufficient recompense
For your heroic deeds on his behalf.

KING.—Nay, Mátali, say not so. My most ambitious expectations were more than realized by the honor conferred on me at the moment when I took my leave. For,

Tinged with celestial sandal, from the breast
Of the great Indra, where before it hung,
A garland of the ever-blooming tree
Of Nandana was cast about my neck
By his own hand: while, in the very presence
Of the assembled gods, I was enthroned
Beside their mighty lord, who smiled to see
His son Jayanta envious of the honor.

MÁTALI.—There is no mark of distinction which your Majesty does not deserve at the hands of the immortals. See,

Heaven's hosts acknowledge thee their second saviour;
For now thy bow's unerring shafts (as erst
The lion-man's terrific claws) have purged
The empyreal sphere from taint of demons foul.

KING.—The praise of my victory must be ascribed to the majesty of Indra.

When mighty gods make men their delegates
In martial enterprise, to them belongs
The palm of victory; and not to mortals.
Could the pale Dawn dispel the shades of night,
Did not the god of day, whose diadem
Is jewelled with a thousand beams of light,
Place him in front of his effulgent car?

MÁTALI.—A very just comparison. [*Driving on.*] Great King, behold! the glory of thy fame has reached even to the vault of heaven.

Hark! yonder inmates of the starry sphere
Sing anthems worthy of thy martial deeds,
While with celestial colors they depict
The story of thy victories on scrolls
Formed of the leaves of heaven's immortal trees.

KING.—My good Mátali, yesterday, when I ascended the sky, I was so eager to do battle with the demons, that the road by which we were travelling towards Indra's heaven escaped my observation. Tell me, in which path of the seven winds are we now moving?

MÁTALI.—We journey in the path of Parivaha;

The wind that bears along the triple Ganges,
And causes Ursa's seven stars to roll
In their appointed orbits, scattering
Their several rays with equal distribution.
'Tis the same path that once was sanctified
By the divine impression of the foot
Of Vishnu, when, to conquer haughty Bali,
He spanned the heavens in his second stride.

KING.—This is the reason, I suppose, that a sensation of calm repose pervades all my senses. [*Looking down at the wheels.*] Ah! Mátali, we are descending towards the earth's atmosphere.

MÁTALI.—What makes you think so?

KING.—The car itself instructs me; we are moving
O'er pregnant clouds, surcharged with rain; below us
I see the moisture-loving Chátakas
In sportive flight dart through the spokes; the steeds
Of Indra glisten with the lightning's flash;
And a thick mist bedews the circling wheels.

MÁTALI.—You are right; in a little while the chariot will touch the ground, and you will be in your own dominions.

KING [*looking down*].—How wonderful is the appearance of the earth as we rapidly descend!

Stupendous prospect! yonder lofty hills
Do suddenly uprear their towering heads
Amid the plain, while from beneath their crests
The ground receding sinks; the trees, whose stems
Seemed lately hid within their leafy tresses,
Rise into elevation, and display
Their branching shoulders; yonder streams, whose waters,
Like silver threads, but now were scarcely seen,
Grow into mighty rivers; lo! the earth
Seems upward hurled by some gigantic power.

MÁTALI.—Well described! [*Looking with awe.*] Grand, indeed, and lovely is the spectacle presented by the earth.

KING.—Tell me, Mátali, what is that range of mountains which, like a bank of clouds illumined by the setting sun, pours down a stream of gold? On one side its base dips into the eastern ocean, and on the other side into the western.

MÁTALI.—Great Prince, it is called "Golden-peak,"[11] and is the abode of the attendants of the god of Wealth. In this spot the highest forms of penance are wrought out.

There Kaśyapa, the great progenitor
Of demons and of gods, himself the offspring
Of the divine Maríchi, Brahmá's son,
With Aditi, his wife, in calm seclusion,
Does holy penance for the good of mortals.

KING.—Then I must not neglect so good an opportunity of obtaining his blessing. I should much like to visit this venerable personage and offer him my homage.

MÁTALI.—By all means! An excellent idea.

[*Guides the car to the earth.*

KING [*in a tone of wonder*].—How's this?

Our chariot wheels move noiselessly. Around
No clouds of dust arise; no shock betokened

[11] A sacred range of mountains lying along the Himálaya chain immediately adjacent to Kailása, the paradise of Kuvera, the god of wealth.

Our contact with the earth; we seem to glide
Above the ground, so lightly do we touch it.

MÁTALI.—Such is the difference between the car of Indra and that of your Majesty.

KING.—In which direction, Mátali, is Kaśyapa's sacred retreat?

MÁTALI [*pointing*].—Where stands yon anchorite, towards the orb
Of the meridian sun, immovable
As a tree's stem, his body half-concealed
By a huge ant-hill. Round about his breast
No sacred cord is twined, but in its stead
A hideous serpent's skin. In place of necklace,
The tendrils of a withered creeper chafe
His wasted neck. His matted hair depends
In thick entanglement about his shoulders,
And birds construct their nests within its folds.

KING.—I salute thee, thou man of austere devotion.

MÁTALI [*holding in the reins of the car*].—Great Prince, we are now in the sacred grove of the holy Kaśyapa—the grove that boasts as its ornament one of the five trees of Indra's heaven, reared by Aditi.

KING.—This sacred retreat is more delightful than heaven itself. I could almost fancy myself bathing in a pool of nectar.

MÁTALI [*stopping the chariot*].—Descend, mighty Prince.

KING [*descending*].—And what will you do, Mátali?

MÁTALI.—The chariot will remain where I have stopped it. We may both descend. [*Doing so.*] This way, great King. [*Walking on*]. You see around you the celebrated region where the holiest sages devote themselves to penitential rites.

KING.—I am filled with awe and wonder as I gaze.
In such a place as this do saints of earth
Long to complete their acts of penance; here,
Beneath the shade of everlasting trees,
Transplanted from the groves of Paradise,
May they inhale the balmy air, and need
No other nourishment; here may they bathe
In fountains sparkling with the golden dust
Of lilies; here, on jewelled slabs of marble,

In meditation rapt, may they recline;
Here, in the presence of celestial nymphs,
E'en passion's voice is powerless to move them.

MÁTALI.—So true is it that the aspirations of the good and great are ever soaring upwards. [*Turning round and speaking off the stage.*] Tell me, Vriddha-śákalya, how is the divine son of Maríchi now engaged? What sayest thou? that he is conversing with Aditi and some of the wives of the great sages, and that they are questioning him respecting the duties of a faithful wife?

KING [*listening*].—Then we must await the holy father's leisure.

MÁTALI [*looking at the King*].—If your Majesty will rest under the shade, at the foot of this Aśoka-tree, I will seek an opportunity of announcing your arrival to Indra's reputed father.

KING.—As you think proper. [*Remains under the tree.*

MÁTALI.—Great King, I go. [*Exit.*

KING [*feeling his arm throb*].—Wherefore this causeless throbbing, O mine arm?
All hope has fled forever; mock me not
With presages of good, when happiness
Is lost, and nought but misery remains.

A VOICE [*behind the scenes*].—Be not so naughty. Do you begin already to show a refractory spirit?

KING [*listening*].—This is no place for petulance. Who can it be whose behavior calls for such a rebuke? [*Looking in the direction of the sound and smiling.*] A child, is it? closely attended by two holy women. His disposition seems anything but childlike. See,
He braves the fury of yon lioness
Suckling its savage offspring, and compels
The angry whelp to leave the half-sucked dug,
Tearing its tender mane in boisterous sport.

Enter a child, attended by two women of the hermitage, in the manner described.

CHILD.—Open your mouth, my young lion, I want to count your teeth.

FIRST ATTENDANT.—You naughty child, why do you tease the

animals? Know you not that we cherish them in this hermitage as if they were our own children? In good sooth, you have a high spirit of your own, and are beginning already to do justice to the name Sarva-damana (All-taming), given you by the hermits.

KING.—Strange! My heart inclines towards the boy with almost as much affection as if he were my own child. What can be the reason? I suppose my own childlessness makes me yearn towards the sons of others.

SECOND ATTENDANT.—This lioness will certainly attack you if you do not release her whelp.

CHILD [*laughing*].—Oh! indeed! let her come. Much I fear her, to be sure. [*Pouts his under-lip in defiance.*

KING.—The germ of mighty courage lies concealed
Within this noble infant, like a spark
Beneath the fuel, waiting but a breath
To fan the flame and raise a conflagration.

FIRST ATTENDANT.—Let the young lion go, like a dear child, and I will give you something else to play with.

CHILD.—Where is it? Give it me first.
[*Stretches out his hand.*

KING [*looking at his hand*].—How's this? His hand exhibits one of those mystic marks which are the sure prognostic of universal empire. See!
His fingers stretched in eager expectation
To grasp the wished-for toy, and knit together
By a close-woven web, in shape resemble
A lotus-blossom, whose expanding petals
The early dawn has only half unfolded.

SECOND ATTENDANT.—We shall never pacify him by mere words, dear Suvratá. Be kind enough to go to my cottage, and you will find there a plaything belonging to Márkándeya, one of the hermit's children. It is a peacock made of China-ware, painted in many colors. Bring it here for the child.

FIRST ATTENDANT.—Very well. [*Exit.*

CHILD.—No, no; I shall go on playing with the young lion.
[*Looks at the female attendant and laughs.*

KING.—I feel an unaccountable affection for this wayward child.
How blessed the virtuous parents whose attire

Is soiled with dust, by raising from the ground
The child that asks a refuge in their arms!
And happy are they while with lisping prattle,
In accents sweetly inarticulate,
He charms their ears; and with his artless smiles
Gladdens their hearts, revealing to their gaze
His tiny teeth, just budding into view.

ATTENDANT.—I see how it is. He pays me no manner of attention. [*Looking off the stage.*] I wonder whether any of the hermits are about here. [*Seeing the King.*] Kind Sir, could you come hither a moment and help me to release the young lion from the clutch of this child, who is teasing him in boyish play?

KING [*approaching and smiling*].—Listen to me, thou child of a mighty saint.

Dost thou dare show a wayward spirit here?
Here, in this hallowed region? Take thou heed
Lest, as the serpent's young defiles the sandal,
Thou bring dishonor on the holy sage,
Thy tender-hearted parent, who delights
To shield from harm the tenants of the wood.

ATTENDANT.—Gentle Sir, I thank you; but he is not the saint's son.

KING.—His behavior and whole bearing would have led me to doubt it, had not the place of his abode encouraged the idea.

[*Follows the child, and takes him by the hand, according to the request of the attendant. Speaking aside.*

I marvel that the touch of this strange child
Should thrill me with delight; if so it be,
How must the fond caresses of a son
Transport the father's soul who gave him being!

ATTENDANT [*looking at them both*].—Wonderful! Prodigious!

KING.—What excites your surprise, my good woman?

ATTENDANT.—I am astonished at the striking resemblance between the child and yourself; and, what is still more extraordinary, he seems to have taken to you kindly and submissively, though you are a stranger to him.

KING [*fondling the child*].—If he be not the son of the great sage, of what family does he come, may I ask?

ATTENDANT.—Of the race of Puru.

KING [*aside*].—What! are we, then, descended from the same ancestry? This, no doubt, accounts for the resemblance she traces between the child and me. Certainly it has always been an established usage among the princes of Puru's race,

To dedicate the morning of their days
To the world's weal, in palaces and halls,
'Mid luxury and regal pomp abiding;
Then, in the wane of life, to seek release
From kingly cares, and make the hallowed shade
Of sacred trees their last asylum, where
As hermits they may practise self-abasement,
And bind themselves by rigid vows of penance.

[*Aloud.*] But how could mortals by their own power gain admission to this sacred region?

ATTENDANT.—Your remark is just; but your wonder will cease when I tell you that his mother is the offspring of a celestial nymph, and gave him birth in the hallowed grove of Kaśyapa.

KING [*aside*].—Strange that my hopes should be again excited! [*Aloud.*] But what, let me ask, was the name of the prince whom she deigned to honor with her hand?

ATTENDANT.—How could I think of polluting my lips by the mention of a wretch who had the cruelty to desert his lawful wife?

KING [*aside*].—Ha! the description suits me exactly. Would I could bring myself to inquire the name of the child's mother! [*Reflecting.*] But it is against propriety to make too minute inquiries about the wife of another man.

FIRST ATTENDANT [*entering with the china peacock in her hand*].—Sarva-damana, Sarva-damana, see, see, what a beautiful Śakoonta (bird).

CHILD [*looking round*].—My mother! Where? Let me go to her.

BOTH ATTENDANTS.—He mistook the word Śakoonta for Śakoontalá. The boy dotes upon his mother, and she is ever uppermost in his thoughts.

SECOND ATTENDANT.—Nay, my dear child, I said, Look at the beauty of this Śakoonta.

KING [*aside*].—What! is his mother's name Śakoontalá? But

the name is not uncommon among women. Alas! I fear the mere similarity of a name, like the deceitful vapor of the desert, has once more raised my hopes only to dash them to the ground.

CHILD [*takes the toy*].—Dear nurse, what a beautiful peacock!

FIRST ATTENDANT [*looking at the child. In great distress*].—Alas! alas! I do not see the amulet on his wrist.

KING.—Don't distress yourself. Here it is. It fell off while he was struggling with the young lion.

[*Stoops to pick it up.*

BOTH ATTENDANTS.—Hold! hold! Touch it not, for your life. How marvellous! He has actually taken it up without the slightest hesitation.

[*Both raise their hands to their breasts and look at each other in astonishment.*

KING.—Why did you try to prevent my touching it?

FIRST ATTENDANT.—Listen, great Monarch. This amulet, known as "The Invincible," was given to the boy by the divine son of Marichi, soon after his birth, when the natal ceremony was performed. Its peculiar virtue is, that when it falls on the ground, no one excepting the father or mother of the child can touch it unhurt.

KING.—And suppose another person touches it?

FIRST ATTENDANT.—Then it instantly becomes a serpent, and bites him.

KING.—Have you ever witnessed the transformation with your own eyes?

BOTH ATTENDANTS.—Over and over again.

KING [*with rapture. Aside*].—Joy! joy! Are then my dearest hopes to be fulfilled? [*Embraces the child.*

SECOND ATTENDANT.—Come, my dear Suvratá, we must inform Śakoontalá immediately of this wonderful event, though we have to interrupt her in the performance of her religious vows. [*Exeunt.*

CHILD [*to the King*].—Do not hold me. I want to go to my mother.

KING.—We will go to her together, and give her joy, my son.

CHILD.—Dushyanta is my father, not you.

KING [*smiling*].—His contradiction convinces me only the more.

Enter Śakoontalá, in widow's apparel, with her long hair twisted into a single braid.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—I have just heard that Sarva-damana's amulet has retained its form, though a stranger raised it from the ground. I can hardly believe in my good fortune. Yet why should not Sánumatí's prediction be verified?

KING [*gazing at Śakoontalá*].—Alas! can this indeed be my Śakoontalá?

Clad in the weeds of widowhood, her face
Emaciate with fasting, her long hair
Twined in a single braid, her whole demeanor
Expressive of her purity of soul:
With patient constancy she thus prolongs
The vow to which my cruelty condemned her.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*gazing at the King, who is pale with remorse*]. Surely this is not like my husband; yet who can it be that dares pollute by the pressure of his hand my child, whose amulet should protect him from a stranger's touch?

CHILD [*going to his mother*].—Mother, who is this man that has been kissing me and calling me his son?

KING.—My best beloved, I have indeed treated thee most cruelly, but am now once more thy fond and affectionate lover. Refuse not to acknowledge me as thy husband.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—Be of good cheer, my heart. The anger of Destiny is at last appeased. Heaven regards thee with compassion. But is he in very truth my husband?

KING.—Behold me, best and loveliest of women,
Delivered from the cloud of fatal darkness
That erst oppressed my memory. Again
Behold us brought together by the grace
Of the great lord of Heaven. So the moon
Shines forth from dim eclipse, to blend his rays
With the soft lustre of his Rohiní.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—May my husband be victorious——

[*She stops short, her voice choked with tears.*

KING.—O fair one, though the utterance of thy prayer
Be lost amid the torrent of thy tears,
Yet does the sight of thy fair countenance,

And of thy pallid lips, all unadorned
And colorless in sorrow for my absence,
Make me already more than conqueror.

CHILD.—Mother, who is this man?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—My child, ask the deity that presides over thy destiny.

KING [*falling at Śakoontalá's feet*].—Fairest of women, banish from thy mind
The memory of my cruelty; reproach
The fell delusion that o'erpowered my soul,
And blame not me, thy husband; 'tis the curse
Of him in whom the power of darkness reigns,
That he mistakes the gifts of those he loves
For deadly evils. Even though a friend
Should wreathe a garland on a blind man's brow,
Will he not cast it from him as a serpent?

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Rise, my own husband, rise. Thou wast not to blame. My own evil deeds, committed in a former state of being, brought down this judgment upon me. How else could my husband, who was ever of a compassionate disposition, have acted so unfeelingly? [*The King rises.*] But tell me, my husband, how did the remembrance of thine unfortunate wife return to thy mind?

KING.—As soon as my heart's anguish is removed, and its wounds are healed, I will tell thee all.
Oh! let me, fair one, chase away the drop
That still bedews the fringes of thine eye;
And let me thus efface the memory
Of every tear that stained thy velvet cheek,
Unnoticed and unheeded by thy lord,
When in his madness he rejected thee.
[*Wipes away the tear.*

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*seeing the signet-ring on his finger*].—Ah! my dear husband, is that the Lost Ring?

KING.—Yes; the moment I recovered it, my memory was restored.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—The ring was to blame in allowing itself to be lost at the very time when I was anxious to convince my noble husband of the reality of my marriage.

KING.—Receive it back, as the beautiful twining plant receives again its blossom in token of its reunion with the spring.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—Nay; I can never more place confidence in it. Let my husband retain it.

Enter Mátali.

MÁTALI.—I congratulate your Majesty. Happy are you in your reunion with your wife: happy are you in beholding the face of your son.

KING.—Yes, indeed. My heart's dearest wish has borne sweet fruit. But tell me, Mátali, is this joyful event known to the great Indra?

MÁTALI [*smiling*].—What is unknown to the gods? But come with me, noble Prince, the divine Kaśyapa graciously permits thee to be presented to him.

KING.—Śakoontalá, take our child and lead the way. We will together go into the presence of the holy Sage.

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—I shrink from entering the august presence of the great Saint, even with my husband at my side.

KING.—Nay; on such a joyous occasion it is highly proper. Come, come; I entreat thee. [*All advance.*

Kaśyapa is discovered seated on a throne with his wife Aditi.

KAŚYAPA [*gazing at Dushyanta. To his wife*].—O Aditi,
This is the mighty hero, King Dushyanta,
Protector of the earth; who, at the head
Of the celestial armies of thy son,
Does battle with the enemies of heaven.
Thanks to his bow, the thunderbolt of Indra
Rests from its work, no more the minister
Of death and desolation to the world,
But a mere symbol of divinity.

ADITI.—He bears in his noble form all the marks of dignity.

MÁTALI [*to Dushyanta*].—Sire, the venerable progenitors of the celestials are gazing at your Majesty with as much affection as if you were their son. You may advance towards them.

KING.—Are these, O Mátali, the holy pair,
Offspring of Daksha and divine Maríchi,
Children of Brahmá's sons, by sages deemed
Sole fountain of celestial light, diffused
Through twelve effulgent orbs? Are these the pair

From whom the ruler of the triple world,
Sovereign of gods and lord of sacrifice,
Sprang into being? That immortal pair
Whom Vishnu, greater than the self-existent,
Chose for his parents, when, to save mankind,
He took upon himself the shape of mortals?

MÁTALI.—Even so.

KING [*prostrating himself*].—Most august of beings, Dushyanta, content to have fulfilled the commands of your son Indra, offers you his adoration.

KAŚYAPA.—My son, long may'st thou live, and happily may'st thou reign over the earth!

ADITI.—My son, may'st thou ever be invincible in the field of battle!

ŚAKOONTALÁ.—I also prostrate myself before you, most adorable beings, and my child with me.

KAŚYAPA.—My daughter,

Thy lord resembles Indra, and thy child
Is noble as Jayanta, Indra's son;
I have no worthier blessing left for thee,
May'st thou be faithful as the god's own wife!

ADITI.—My daughter, may'st thou be always the object of thy husband's fondest love; and may thy son live long to be the joy of both his parents! Be seated.

[*All sit down in the presence of Kaśyapa.*

KAŚYAPA [*regarding each of them by turns*].—Hail to the beautiful Śakoontalá!

Hail to her noble son! and hail to thee,
Illustrious Prince! Rare triple combination
Of virtue, wealth, and energy united!

KING.—Most venerable Kaśyapa, by your favor all my desires were accomplished even before I was admitted to your presence. Never was mortal so honored that his boon should be granted ere it was solicited. Because,

Bloom before fruit, the clouds before the rain—
Cause first and then effect, in endless sequence,
Is the unchanging law of constant nature:
But, ere the blessing issued from thy lips,
The wishes of my heart were all fulfilled.

MÁTALI.—It is thus that the great progenitors of the world confer favors.

KING.—Most reverend Sage, this thy handmaid was married to me by the Gandharva ceremony, and after a time was conducted to my palace by her relations. Meanwhile a fatal delusion seized me; I lost my memory and rejected her, thus committing a grievous offence against the venerable Kanwa, who is of thy divine race. Afterwards the sight of this ring restored my faculties, and brought back to my mind all the circumstances of my union with his daughter. But my conduct still seems to me incomprehensible;

As foolish as the fancies of a man
Who, when he sees an elephant, denies
That 'tis an elephant, yet afterwards,
When its huge bulk moves onward, hesitates,
Yet will not be convinced till it has passed
Forever from his sight, and left behind
No vestige of its presence save its footsteps.

KASYAPA.—My son, cease to think thyself in fault. Even the delusion that possessed thy mind was not brought about by any act of thine. Listen to me.

KING.—I am attentive.

KASYAPA.—Know that when the nymph Menaká, the mother of Śakoontalá, became aware of her daughter's anguish in consequence of the loss of the ring at the nymphs' pool, and of thy subsequent rejection of her, she brought her and confided her to the care of Aditi. And I no sooner saw her than I ascertained by my divine power of meditation, that thy repudiation of thy poor faithful wife had been caused entirely by the curse of Durvásas—not by thine own fault—and that the spell would terminate on the discovery of the ring.

KING [*drawing a deep breath*].—Oh! what a weight is taken off my mind, now that my character is cleared of reproach.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—Joy! joy! My revered husband did not, then, reject me without good reason, though I have no recollection of the curse pronounced upon me. But, in all probability, I unconsciously brought it upon myself, when I was so distracted on being separated from my husband soon after our marriage. For I now remember that my two friends advised me not to fail to show the ring in case he should have forgotten me.

KAŚYAPA.—At last, my daughter, thou art happy, and hast gained thy heart's desire. Indulge, then, no feeling of resentment against thy partner. See, now,

Though he repulsed thee, 'twas the sage's curse
That clouded his remembrance; 'twas the curse
That made thy tender husband harsh towards thee.
Soon as the spell was broken, and his soul
Delivered from its darkness, in a moment
Thou didst gain thine empire o'er his heart.
So on the tarnished surface of a mirror
No image is reflected, till the dust
That dimmed its wonted lustre is removed.

KING.—Holy father, see here the hope of my royal race.

[*Takes his child by the hand.*

KAŚYAPA.—Know that he, too, will become the monarch of the whole earth. Observe,

Soon, a resistless hero, shall he cross
The trackless ocean, borne above the waves
In an aerial car; and shall subdue
The earth's seven sea-girt isles.[12] Now has he gained,
As the brave tamer of the forest-beasts,
The title Sarva-damana; but then
Mankind shall hail him as King Bharata,
And call him the supporter of the world.

KING.—We cannot but entertain the highest hopes of a child for whom your highness performed the natal rites.

ADITI.—My revered husband, should not the intelligence be conveyed to Kanwa, that his daughter's wishes are fulfilled, and her happiness complete? He is Śakoontalá's foster-father. Menaká, who is one of my attendants, is her mother, and dearly does she love her daughter.

ŚAKOONTALÁ [*aside*].—The venerable matron has given utterance to the very wish that was in my mind.

KAŚYAPA.—His penances have gained for him the faculty of omniscience, and the whole scene is already present to his mind's eye.

KING.—Then most assuredly he cannot be very angry with me.

[12] According to the mythical geography of the Hindoos the earth consisted of seven islands surrounded by seven seas.

KAŚYAPA.—Nevertheless it becomes us to send him intelligence of this happy event, and hear his reply. What, ho there!

PUPIL [*entering*].—Holy father, what are your commands?

KAŚYAPA.—My good Gálava, delay not an instant, but hasten through the air and convey to the venerable Kanwa, from me, the happy news that the fatal spell has ceased, that Dushyanta's memory is restored, that his daughter Śakoontalá has a son, and that she is once more tenderly acknowledged by her husband.

PUPIL.—Your highness's commands shall be obeyed. [*Exit.*

KAŚYAPA.—And now, my dear son, take thy consort and thy child, re-ascend the car of Indra, and return to thy imperial capital.

KING.—Most holy father, I obey.

KAŚYAPA.—And accept this blessing—

For countless ages may the god of gods,
Lord of the atmosphere, by copious showers
Secure abundant harvest to thy subjects;
And thou by frequent offerings preserve
The Thunderer's friendship! Thus, by interchange
Of kindly actions, may you both confer
Unnumbered benefits on earth and heaven!

KING.—Holy father, I will strive, as far as I am able, to attain this happiness.

KAŚYAPA.—What other favor can I bestow on thee, my son?

KING.—What other can I desire? If, however, you permit me to form another wish, I would humbly beg that the saying of the sage Bharata be fulfilled:—

May kings reign only for their subjects' weal!
May the divine Saraswati, the source
Of speech, and goddess of dramatic art,
Be ever honored by the great and wise!
And may the purple self-existent god,
Whose vital Energy pervades all space,
From future transmigrations save my soul!

[*Exeunt omnes.*

BALLADS OF HINDOSTAN

—

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

—

BY

TORU DUTT

INTRODUCTION

IF Toru Dutt were alive, she would still be younger than any recognized European writer, and yet her fame, which is already considerable, has been entirely posthumous. Within the brief space of four years which now divides us from the date of her decease, her genius has been revealed to the world under many phases, and has been recognized throughout France and England. Her name, at least, is no longer unfamiliar in the ear of any well-read man or woman. But at the hour of her death she had published but one book, and that book had found but two reviewers in Europe. One of these, M. André Theuriet, the well-known poet and novelist, gave the "Sheaf gleaned in French Fields" adequate praise in the "Revue des Deux Mondes"; but the other, the writer of the present notice, has a melancholy satisfaction in having been a little earlier still in sounding the only note of welcome which reached the dying poetess from England. It was while Professor W. Minto was editor of the "Examiner," that one day in August, 1876, in the very heart of the dead season for books, I happened to be in the office of that newspaper, and was upbraiding the whole body of publishers for issuing no books worth reviewing. At that moment the postman brought in a thin and sallow packet with a wonderful Indian postmark on it, and containing a most unattractive orange pamphlet of verse, printed at Bhowanipore, and entitled "A Sheaf gleaned in French Fields, by Toru Dutt." This shabby little book of some two hundred pages, without preface or introduction, seemed specially destined by its particular providence to find its way hastily into the waste-paper basket. I remember that Mr. Minto thrust it into my unwilling hands, and said "There! see whether you can't make something of that." A hopeless volume it seemed, with its queer type, published at Bhowanipore, printed at the Saptahiksambad Press! But when at last

I took it out of my pocket, what was my surprise and almost rapture to open at such verse as this:—

"Still barred thy doors! The far East glows,
The morning wind blows fresh and free.
Should not the hour that wakes the rose
Awaken also thee?

"All look for thee, Love, Light, and Song,
Light in the sky deep red above,
Song, in the lark of pinions strong,
And in my heart, true Love.

"Apart we miss our nature's goal,
Why strive to cheat our destinies?
Was not my love made for thy soul?
Thy beauty for mine eyes?
No longer sleep,
Oh, listen now!
I wait and weep,
But where art thou?"

When poetry is as good as this it does not much matter whether Rouveyre prints it upon Whatman paper, or whether it steals to light in blurred type from some press in Bhowanipore.

Toru Dutt was the youngest of the three children of a high-caste Hindoo couple in Bengal. Her father, who survives them all, the Baboo Govin Chunder Dutt, is himself distinguished among his countrymen for the width of his views and the vigor of his intelligence. His only son, Abju, died in 1865, at the age of fourteen, and left his two younger sisters to console their parents. Aru, the elder daughter, born in 1854, was eighteen months senior to Toru, the subject of this memoir, who was born in Calcutta on March 4, 1856. With the exception of one year's visit to Bombay, the childhood of these girls was spent in Calcutta, at their father's garden-house. In a poem now printed for the first time, Toru refers to the scene of her earliest memories, the circling wilderness of foliage, the shining tank with the round leaves of the lilies, the murmuring dusk under the vast branches of the central casuarina-tree. Here, in a mystical retirement more irksome to a European in fancy than to an Oriental in reality, the brain of this wonderful child was moulded. She was pure Hindoo, full of the typical qualities of her race and blood, and, as the present vol-

ume shows us for the first time, preserving to the last her appreciation of the poetic side of her ancient religion, though faith itself in Vishnu and Siva had been cast aside with childish things and been replaced by a purer faith. Her mother fed her imagination with the old songs and legends of their people, stories which it was the last labor of her life to weave into English verse; but it would seem that the marvellous faculties of Toru's mind still slumbered, when, in her thirteenth year, her father decided to take his daughters to Europe to learn English and French. To the end of her days Toru was a better French than English scholar. She loved France best, she knew its literature best, she wrote its language with more perfect elegance. The Dutts arrived in Europe at the close of 1869, and the girls went to school, for the first and last time, at a French pension. They did not remain there very many months; their father took them to Italy and England with him, and finally they attended for a short time, but with great zeal and application, the lectures for women at Cambridge. In November, 1873, they went back to Bengal, and the four remaining years of Toru's life were spent in the old garden-house at Calcutta, in a feverish dream of intellectual effort and imaginative production. When we consider what she achieved in these forty-five months of seclusion, it is impossible to wonder that the frail and hectic body succumbed under so excessive a strain.

She brought with her from Europe a store of knowledge that would have sufficed to make an English or French girl seem learned, but which in her case was simply miraculous. Immediately on her return she began to study Sanscrit with the same intense application which she gave to all her work, and mastering the language with extraordinary swiftness, she plunged into its mysterious literature. But she was born to write, and despairing of an audience in her own language, she began to adopt ours as a medium for her thought. Her first essay, published when she was eighteen, was a monograph, in the "Bengal Magazine," on Leconte de Lisle, a writer with whom she had a sympathy which is very easy to comprehend. The austere poet of "La Mort de Valmiki" was, obviously, a figure to whom the poet of "Sindhu" must needs be attracted on approaching European literature. This study, which was illustrated by translations into English verse, was followed

by another on Joséphin Soulary, in whom she saw more than her maturer judgment might have justified. There is something very interesting and now, alas! still more pathetic in these sturdy and workmanlike essays in unaided criticism. Still more solitary her work became, in July, 1874, when her only sister, Aru, died, at the age of twenty. She seems to have been no less amiable than her sister, and if gifted with less originality and a less forcible ambition, to have been finely accomplished. Both sisters were well-trained musicians, with full contralto voices, and Aru had a faculty for design which promised well. The romance of "Mlle. D'Arvers" was originally projected for Aru to illustrate, but no page of this book did Aru ever see.

In 1876, as we have said, appeared that obscure first volume at Bhowanipore. The "Sheaf gleaned in French Fields" is certainly the most imperfect of Toru's writings, but it is not the least interesting. It is a wonderful mixture of strength and weakness, of genius overriding great obstacles, and of talent succumbing to ignorance and inexperience. That it should have been performed at all is so extraordinary that we forget to be surprised at its inequality. The English verse is sometimes exquisite; at other times the rules of our prosody are absolutely ignored, and it is obvious that the Hindoo poetess was chanting to herself a music that is discord in an English ear. The notes are no less curious, and to a stranger no less bewildering. Nothing could be more naïve than the writer's ignorance at some points, or more startling than her learning at others. On the whole, the attainment of the book was simply astounding. It consisted of a selection of translations from nearly one hundred French poets, chosen by the poetess herself on a principle of her own which gradually dawned upon the careful reader. She eschewed the Classicist writers as though they had never existed. For her André Chenier was the next name in chronological order after Du Bartas. Occasionally she showed a profundity of research that would have done no discredit to Mr. Saintsbury or "le doux Asselineau." She was ready to pronounce an opinion on Napol le Pyrénéan or detect a plagiarism in Baudelaire. But she thought that Alexander Smith was still alive, and she was curiously vague about the career of Sainte-Beuve. This inequality of equipment was a thing inevitable to her isolation, and

hardly worthy recording, except to show how laborious her mind was, and how quick to make the best of small resources.

We have already seen that the "Sheaf gleaned in French Fields" attracted the very minimum of attention in England. In France it was talked about a little more. M. Garcin de Tassy, the famous Orientalist, who scarcely survived Toru by twelve months, spoke of it to Mlle. Clarisse Bader, author of a somewhat remarkable book on the position of women in ancient Indian society. Almost simultaneously this volume fell into the hands of Toru, and she was moved to translate it into English, for the use of Hindoos less instructed than herself. In January, 1877, she accordingly wrote to Mlle. Bader requesting her authorization, and received a prompt and kind reply. On the 18th of March Toru wrote again to this, her solitary correspondent in the world of European literature, and her letter, which has been preserved, shows that she had already descended into the valley of the shadow of death:—

"Ma constitution n'est pas forte; j'ai contracté une toux opiniâtre, il y a plus de deux ans, qui ne me quitte point. Cependant j'espère mettre la main à l'œuvre bientôt. Je ne peux dire, mademoiselle, combien votre affection—car vous les aimez, votre livre et votre lettre en témoignent assez—pour mes compatriotes et mon pays me touche; et je suis fière de pouvoir le dire que les héroïnes de nos grandes épopées sont dignes de tout honneur et de tout amour. Y a-t-il d'héroïne plus touchante, plus aimable que Sîta? Je ne le crois pas. *Quand j'entends ma mère chanter, le soir, les vieux chants de notre pays, je pleure presque toujours.* La plainte de Sita, quand, bannie pour la séconde fois, elle erre dans la vaste forêt, seule, le désespoir et l'effroi dans l'âme, est si pathétique qu'il n'y a personne, je crois, qui puisse l'entendre sans verser des larmes. Je vous envois sous ce pli deux petites traductions du Sanscrit, cette belle langue antique. Malheureusement j'ai été obligée de faire cesser mes traductions de Sanscrit, il y a six mois. Ma santé ne me permet pas de les continuer."

These simple and pathetic words, in which the dying poetess pours out her heart to the one friend she had, and that one gained too late, seem as touching and as beautiful as any strain of Marceline Valmore's immortal verse. In English poetry I do not remember anything that exactly parallels their resigned melancholy. Before the month of March was over, Toru had taken to her bed. Unable to write, she continued to read, strewing her sick-room with the latest European books, and entering with interest into the questions raised by the So-

ciété Asiatique of Paris, in its printed Transactions. On the 30th of July she wrote her last letter to Mlle. Clarisse Bader, and a month later, on August 30, 1877, at the age of twenty-one years six months and twenty-six days, she breathed her last in her father's house in Maniktollah street, Calcutta.

In the first distraction of grief it seemed as though her unequalled promise had been entirely blighted, and as though she would be remembered only by her single book. But as her father examined her papers, one completed work after another revealed itself. First a selection from the sonnets of the Comte de Grammont, translated into English, turned up, and was printed in a Calcutta magazine; then some fragments of an English story, which were printed in another Calcutta magazine. Much more important, however, than any of thsee was a complete romance, written in French, being the identical story for which her sister Aru had proposed to make the illustrations. In the meantime Toru was no sooner dead than she began to be famous. In May, 1878, there appeared a second edition of the "Sheaf gleaned in French Fields," with a touching sketch of her death, by her father; and in 1879 was published, under the editorial care of Mlle. Clarisse Bader, the romance of "Le Journal de Mlle. D'Arvers," forming a handsome volume of 259 pages. This book, begun, as it appears, before the family returned from Europe, and finished nobody knows when, is an attempt to describe scenes from modern French society, but it is less interesting as an experiment of the fancy, than as a revelation of the mind of a young Hindoo woman of genius. The story is simple, clearly told, and interesting; the studies of character have nothing French about them, but they are full of vigor and originality. The description of the hero is most characteristically Indian:—

"Il est beau en effet. Sa taille est haute, mais quelques-uns la trouveraient mince; sa chevelure noire est bouclée et tombe jusqu'à la nuque; ses yeux noirs sont profonds et bien fendus; le front est noble; la lèvre supérieure, couverte par une moustache naissante et noire, est parfaitement modelée; son menton a quelque chose de sévère; son teint est d'un blanc presque féminin, ce qui dénote sa haute naissance."

In this description we seem to recognize some Surya or Soma of Hindoo mythology, and the final touch, meaningless as applied to a European, reminds us that in India whiteness

of skin has always been a sign of aristocratic birth, from the days when it originally distinguished the conquering Aryas from the indigenous race of the Dasyous.

As a literary composition "Mlle. D'Arvers" deserves high commendation. It deals with the ungovernable passion of two brothers for one placid and beautiful girl, a passion which leads to fratricide and madness. That it is a very melancholy and tragical story is obvious from this brief sketch of its contents, but it is remarkable for coherence and self-restraint no less than for vigor of treatment. Toru Dutt never sinks to melodrama in the course of her extraordinary tale, and the wonder is that she is not more often fantastic and unreal.

But we believe that the original English poems will be ultimately found to constitute Toru's chief legacy to posterity. These ballads form the last and most matured of her writings, and were left so far fragmentary at her death that the fourth and fifth in her projected series of nine were not to be discovered in any form among her papers. It is probable that she had not even commenced them. Her father, therefore, to give a certain continuity to the series, has filled up these blanks with two stories from the "Vishnupurana," which originally appeared respectively in the "Calcutta Review" and in the "Bengal Magazine." These are interesting, but a little rude in form, and they have not the same peculiar value as the rhymed octo-syllabic ballads. In these last we see Toru no longer attempting vainly, though heroically, to compete with European literature on its own ground, but turning to the legends of her own race and country for inspiration. No modern Oriental has given us so strange an insight into the conscience of the Asiatic as is presented in the story of "Prehlad," or so quaint a piece of religious fancy as the ballad of "Jogadhya Uma." The poetess seems in these verses to be chanting to herself those songs of her mother's race to which she always turned with tears of pleasure. They breathe a Vedic solemnity and simplicity of temper, and are singularly devoid of that littleness and frivolity which seem, if we may judge by a slight experience, to be the bane of modern India.

As to the merely technical character of these poems, it may be suggested that in spite of much in them that is rough and inchoate, they show that Toru was advancing in her mastery of English verse. Such a stanza as this, selected out of many

no less skilful, could hardly be recognized as the work of one by whom the language was a late acquirement:—

"What glorious trees! The sombre saul,
On which the eye delights to rest—
The betel-nut, a pillar tall,
With feathery branches for a crest—
The light-leaved tamarind spreading wide—
The pale faint-scented bitter neem,
The seemul, gorgeous as a bride,
With flowers that have the ruby's gleam."

In other passages, of course, the text reads like a translation from some stirring ballad, and we feel that it gives but a faint and discordant echo of the music welling in Toru's brain. For it must frankly be confessed that in the brief May-day of her existence she had not time to master our language as Blanco White did, or as Chamisso mastered German. To the end of her days, fluent and graceful as she was, she was not entirely conversant with English, especially with the colloquial turns of modern speech. Often a very fine thought is spoiled for hypercritical ears by the queer turn of expression which she has innocently given to it. These faults are found to a much smaller degree in her miscellaneous poems. Her sonnets seem to me to be of great beauty, and her longer piece, entitled "Our Casuarina Tree," needs no apology for its rich and mellifluous numbers.

It is difficult to exaggerate when we try to estimate what we have lost in the premature death of Toru Dutt. Literature has no honors which need have been beyond the grasp of a girl who at the age of twenty-one, and in languages separated from her own by so deep a chasm, had produced so much of lasting worth. And her courage and fortitude were worthy of her intelligence. Among "last words" of celebrated people, that which her father has recorded, "It is only the physical pain that makes me cry," is not the least remarkable, or the least significant of strong character. It was to a native of our island, and to one ten years senior to Toru, to whom it was said, in words more appropriate, surely, to her than to Oldham,

"Thy generous fruits, though gathered ere their prime,
Still showed a quickness, and maturing time
But mellows what we write to the dull sweets of Rime."

That mellow sweetness was all that Toru lacked to perfect her as an English poet, and of no other Oriental who has ever lived can the same be said. When the history of the literature of our country comes to be written, there is sure to be a page in it dedicated to this fragile exotic blossom of song.

EDMUND W. GOSSE.

London, 1881.

BALLADS OF HINDOSTAN

JOGADHYA UMA

"SHELL-BRACELETS ho! Shell-bracelets ho!
Fair maids and matrons come and buy!"
Along the road, in morning's glow,
The pedler raised his wonted cry.
The road ran straight, a red, red line,
To Khirogram, for cream renowned,
Through pasture-meadows where the kine,
In knee-deep grass, stood magic bound
And half awake, involved in mist,
That floated in dun coils profound,
Till by the sudden sunbeams kissed
Rich rainbow hues broke all around.

"Shell-bracelets ho! Shell-bracelets ho!"
The roadside trees still dripped with dew,
And hung their blossoms like a show.
Who heard the cry? 'Twas but a few,
A ragged herd-boy, here and there,
With his long stick and naked feet;
A ploughman wending to his care,
The field from which he hopes the wheat;
An early traveller, hurrying fast
To the next town; an urchin slow
Bound for the school; these heard and passed,
Unheeding all—"Shell-bracelets ho!"

Pellucid spread a lake-like tank
Beside the road now lonelier still,
High on three sides arose the bank
Which fruit-trees shadowed at their will;

Upon the fourth side was the Ghat,
With its broad stairs of marble white,
And at the entrance-arch there sat,
Full face against the morning light,
A fair young woman with large eyes,
And dark hair falling to her zone,
She heard the pedler's cry arise,
And eager seemed his ware to own.

"Shell-bracelets ho! See, maiden see!
The rich enamel sunbeam kissed!
Happy, oh happy, shalt thou be,
Let them but clasp that slender wrist;
These bracelets are a mighty charm,
They keep a lover ever true,
And widowhood avert, and harm,
Buy them, and thou shalt never rue.
Just try them on!"—She stretched her hand,
"Oh what a nice and lovely fit!
No fairer hand, in all the land,
And lo! the bracelet matches it."

Dazzled the pedler on her gazed
Till came the shadow of a fear,
While she the bracelet arm upraised
Against the sun to view more clear.
Oh she was lovely, but her look
Had something of a high command
That filled with awe. Aside she shook
Intruding curls by breezes fanned
And blown across her brows and face,
And asked the price, which when she heard
She nodded, and with quiet grace
For payment to her home referred.

"And where, O maiden, is thy house?
But no, that wrist-ring has a tongue,
No maiden art thou, but a spouse,
Happy, and rich, and fair, and young."
"Far otherwise, my lord is poor,
And him at home thou shalt not find;

Ask for my father; at the door
Knock loudly; he is deaf, but kind.
Seest thou that lofty gilded spire
Above these tufts of foliage green?
That is our place; its point of fire
Will guide thee o'er the tract between."

"That is the temple spire."—"Yes, there
We live; my father is the priest,
The manse is near, a building fair
But lowly, to the temple's east.
When thou hast knocked, and seen him, say,
His daughter, at Dhamaser Ghat,
Shell-bracelets bought from thee to-day,
And he must pay so much for that.
Be sure, he will not let thee pass
Without the value, and a meal.
If he demur, or cry alas!
No money hath he—then reveal,

Within the small box, marked with streaks
Of bright vermilion, by the shrine,
The key whereof has lain for weeks
Untouched, he'll find some coin—'tis mine.
That will enable him to pay
The bracelet's price, now fare thee well!"
She spoke, the pedler went away,
Charmed with her voice, as by some spell;
While she left lonely there, prepared
To plunge into the water pure,
And like a rose her beauty bared,
From all observance quite secure.

Not weak she seemed, nor delicate,
Strong was each limb of flexile grace,
And full the bust; the mien elate,
Like hers, the goddess of the chase
On Latmos hill—and oh, the face
Framed in its cloud of floating hair,
No painter's hand might hope to trace
The beauty and the glory there!

Well might the pedler look with awe,
For though her eyes were soft, a ray
Lit them at times, which kings who saw
Would never dare to disobey.

Onwards through groves the pedler sped
Till full in front the sunlit spire
Arose before him. Paths which led
To gardens trim in gay attire
Lay all around. And lo! the manse,
Humble but neat with open door!
He paused, and blest the lucky chance
That brought his bark to such a shore.
Huge straw ricks, log huts full of grain,
Sleek cattle, flowers, a tinkling bell,
Spoke in a language sweet and plain,
"Here smiling Peace and Plenty dwell."

Unconsciously he raised his cry,
"Shell-bracelets ho!" And at his voice
Looked out the priest, with eager eye,
And made his heart at once rejoice.
"Ho, *Sankha* pedler! Pass not by,
But step thou in, and share the food
Just offered on our altar high,
If thou art in a hungry mood.
Welcome are all to this repast!
The rich and poor, the high and low!
Come, wash thy feet, and break thy fast,
Then on thy journey strengthened go."

"Oh thanks, good priest! Observance due
And greetings! May thy name be blest!
I came on business, but I knew,
Here might be had both food and rest
Without a charge; for all the poor
Ten miles around thy sacred shrine
Know that thou keepest open door,
And praise that generous hand of thine:
But let my errand first be told,
For bracelets sold to thine this day,

So much thou owest me in gold,
Hast thou the ready cash to pay?

The bracelets were enamelled—so
The price is high."—"How! Sold to mine?
Who bought them, I should like to know."
"Thy daughter, with the large black eyne,
Now bathing at the marble ghat."
Loud laughed the priest at this reply,
"I shall not put up, friend, with that;
No daughter in the world have I,
An only son is all my stay;
Some minx has played a trick, no doubt,
But cheer up, let thy heart be gay.
Be sure that I shall find her out."

"Nay, nay, good father, such a face
Could not deceive, I must aver;
At all events, she knows thy place,
'And if my father should demur
To pay thee'—thus she said—'or cry
He has no money, tell him straight
The box vermilion-streaked to try,
That's near the shrine.'" "Well, wait, friend, wait!"
The priest said thoughtful, and he ran
And with the open box came back,
"Here is the price exact, my man,
No surplus over, and no lack.

How strange! how strange! Oh blest art thou
To have beheld her, touched her hand,
Before whom Vishnu's self must bow,
And Brahma and his heavenly band!
Here have I worshipped her for years
And never seen the vision bright;
Vigils and fasts and secret tears
Have almost quenched my outward sight;
And yet that dazzling form and face
I have not seen, and thou, dear friend,
To thee, unsought for, comes the grace,
What may its purport be, and end?

How strange! How strange! Oh happy thou!
And couldst thou ask no other boon
Than thy poor bracelet's price? That brow
Resplendent as the autumn moon
Must have bewildered thee, I trow,
And made thee lose thy senses all."
A dim light on the pedler now
Began to dawn; and he let fall
His bracelet basket in his haste,
And backward ran the way he came;
What meant the vision fair and chaste,
Whose eyes were they—those eyes of flame?

Swift ran the pedler as a hind,
The old priest followed on his trace,
They reached the Ghat but could not find
The lady of the noble face.
The birds were silent in the wood,
The lotus flowers exhaled a smell
Faint, over all the solitude,
A heron as a sentinel
Stood by the bank. They called—in vain,
No answer came from hill or fell,
The landscape lay in slumber's chain,
E'en Echo slept within her cell.

Broad sunshine, yet a hush profound!
They turned with saddened hearts to go;
Then from afar there came a sound
Of silver bells;—the priest said low,
"O Mother, Mother, deign to hear,
The worship-hour has rung; we wait
In meek humility and fear.
Must we return home desolate?
Oh come, as late thou cam'st unsought,
Or was it but an idle dream?
Give us some sign if it was not,
A word, a breath, or passing gleam."

Sudden from out the water sprung
A rounded arm, on which they saw

As high the lotus buds among
It rose, the bracelet white, with awe.
Then a wide ripple tost and swung
The blossoms on that liquid plain,
And lo! the arm so fair and young
Sank in the waters down again.
They bowed before the mystic Power,
And as they home returned in thought,
Each took from thence a lotus flower
In memory of the day and spot.

Years, centuries, have passed away,
And still before the temple shrine
Descendants of the pedler pay
Shell-bracelets of the old design
As annual tribute. Much they own
In lands and gold—but they confess
From that eventful day alone
Dawned on their industry—success.
Absurd may be the tale I tell,
Ill-suited to the marching times,
I loved the lips from which it fell,
So let it stand among my rhymes.

BUTTOO

"HO! Master of the wondrous art!
Instruct me in fair archery,
And buy for aye—a grateful heart
That will not grudge to give thy fee."
Thus spoke a lad with kindling eyes,
A hunter's lowborn son was he—
To Dronacharjya, great and wise,
Who sat with princes round his knee.

Up Time's fair stream far back—oh far,
The great wise teacher must be sought!
The Kurus had not yet in war
With the Pandava brethren fought.
In peace, at Dronacharjya's feet,
Magic and archery they learned,
A complex science, which we meet
No more, with ages past inurned.

"And who art thou," the teacher said,
"My science brave to learn so fain?
Which many kings who wear the thread
Have asked to learn of me in vain."
"My name is Buttoo," said the youth,
"A hunter's son, I know not Fear;"
The teacher answered, smiling smooth,
"Then know him from this time, my dear."

Unseen the magic arrow came,
Amidst the laughter and the scorn
Of royal youths—like lightning flame
Sudden and sharp. They blew the horn,

As down upon the ground he fell,
Not hurt, but made a jest and game;—
He rose—and waved a proud farewell,
But cheek and brow grew red with shame.

And lo—a single, single tear
Dropped from his eyelash as he past,
" My place I gather is not here;
No matter—what is rank or caste?
In us is honor, or disgrace,
Not out of us," 'twas thus he mused,
" The question is—not wealth or place,
But gifts well used, or gifts abused."

" And I shall do my best to gain
The science that man will not teach,
For life is as a shadow vain,
Until the utmost goal we reach
To which the soul points. I shall try
To realize my waking dream,
And what if I should chance to die?
None miss one bubble from a stream."

So thinking, on and on he went,
Till he attained the forest's verge,
The garish day was well-nigh spent,
Birds had already raised its dirge.
Oh what a scene! How sweet and calm!
It soothed at once his wounded pride,
And on his spirit shed a balm
That all its yearnings purified.

What glorious trees! The sombre saul
On which the eye delights to rest,
The betel-nut—a pillar tall,
With feathery branches for a crest,
The light-leaved tamarind spreading wide,
The pale faint-scented bitter neem,
The seemul, gorgeous as a bride,
With flowers that have the ruby's gleam,

The Indian fig's pavilion tent
In which whole armies might repose,
With here and there a little rent,
The sunset's beauty to disclose,
The bamboo boughs that sway and swing
'Neath bulbuls as the south wind blows,
The mango-tope, a close dark ring,
Home of the rooks and clamorous crows,

The champac, bok, and South-sea pine,
The nagessur with pendant flowers
Like ear-rings—and the forest vine
That clinging over all, embowers,
The sirish famed in Sanscrit song
Which rural maidens love to wear,
The peepul giant-like and strong,
The bramble with its matted hair,

All these, and thousands, thousands more,
With helmet red, or golden crown,
Or green tiara, rose before
The youth in evening's shadows brown.
He passed into the forest—there
New sights of wonder met his view,
A waving Pampas green and fair
All glistening with the evening dew.

How vivid was the breast-high grass!
Here waved in patches, forest corn—
Here intervened a deep morass—
Here arid spots of verdure shorn
Lay open—rock or barren sand—
And here again the trees arose
Thick clustering—a glorious band
Their tops still bright with sunset glows.—

Stirred in the breeze the crowding boughs,
And seemed to welcome him with signs,
Onwards and on—till Buttoo's brows
Are gemmed with pearls, and day declines.

Then in a grassy open space
He sits and leans against a tree,
To let the wind blow on his face
And look around him leisurely.

Herds, and still herds, of timid deer
Were feeding in the solitude,
They knew not man, and felt no fear,
And heeded not his neighborhood,
Some young ones with large eyes and sweet
Came close, and rubbed their foreheads smooth
Against his arms, and licked his feet,
As if they wished his cares to soothe.

"They touch me," he exclaimed with joy,
"They have no pride of caste like men,
They shrink not from the hunter-boy,
Should not my home be with them then?
Here in this forest let me dwell,
With these companions innocent,
And learn each science and each spell
All by myself in banishment.

A calm, calm life, and it shall be
Its own exceeding great reward!
No thoughts to vex in all I see,
No jeers to bear or disregard;—
All creatures and inanimate things
Shall be my tutors; I shall learn
From beast, and fish, and bird with wings,
And rock, and stream, and tree, and fern.

With this resolve, he soon began
To build a hut, of reeds and leaves,
And when that needful work was done
He gathered in his store, the sheaves
Of forest corn, and all the fruit,
Date, plum, guava, he could find,
And every pleasant nut and root
By Providence for man designed,

A statue next of earth he made,
An image of the teacher wise,
So deft he laid, the light and shade,
On figure, forehead, face and eyes,
That any one who chanced to view
That image tall might soothly swear,
If he great Dronacharjya knew,
The teacher in his flesh was there.

Then at the statue's feet he placed
A bow, and arrows tipped with steel,
With wild-flower garlands interlaced,
And hailed the figure in his zeal
As Master, and his head he bowed,
A pupil reverent from that hour
Of one who late had disallowed
The claim, in pride of place and power.

By strainèd sense, by constant prayer,
By steadfastness of heart and will,
By courage to confront and dare,
All obstacles he conquered still;
A conscience clear—a ready hand,
Joined to a meek humility,
Success must everywhere command,
How could he fail who had all three!

And now, by tests assured, he knows
His own God-gifted wondrous might,
Nothing to any man he owes,
Unaided he has won the fight;
Equal to gods themselves—above
Wishmo and Drona—for his worth
His name, he feels, shall be with love
Reckoned with great names of the earth.

Yet lacks he not, in reverence
To Dronacharjya, who declined
To teach him—nay, with e'en offence
That well might wound a noble mind,

Drove him away;—for in his heart
Meek, placable, and ever kind,
Resentment had not any part,
And Malice never was enshrined.

One evening, on his work intent,
Alone he practised Archery,
When lo! the bow proved false and sent
The arrow from its mark awry;
Again he tried—and failed again;
Why was it? Hark!—A wild dog's bark!
An evil omen:—it was plain
Some evil on his path hung dark!

Thus many times he tried and failed,
And still that lean, persistent dog
At distance, like some spirit wailed,
Safe in the cover of a fog.
His nerves unstrung, with many a shout
He strove to frighten it away,
It would not go—but roamed about,
Howling, as wolves howl for their prey.

Worried and almost in a rage,
One magic shaft at last he sent,
A sample of his science sage,
To quiet but the noises meant.
Unerring to its goal it flew,
No death ensued, no blood was dropped,
But by the hush the young man knew
At last that howling noise had stopped.

It happened on this very day
That the Pandava princes came
With all the Kuru princes gay
To beat the woods and hunt the game.
Parted from others in the chase,
Arjuna brave the wild dog found—
Stuck still the shaft—but not a trace
Of hurt, though tongue and lip were bound.

"Wonder of wonders! Didst not thou
O Dronacharjya, promise me
Thy crown in time should deck my brow
And I be first in archery?
Lo! here, some other thou hast taught
A magic spell—to all unknown;
Who has in secret from thee bought
The knowledge, in this arrow shown!"

Indignant thus Arjuna spake
To his great Master when they met—
"My word, my honor, is at stake,
Judge not, Arjuna, judge not yet.
Come, let us see the dog"—and straight
They followed up the creature's trace.
They found it, in the self-same state,
Dumb, yet unhurt—near Buttoo's place.

A hut—a statue—and a youth
In the dim forest—what mean these?
They gazed in wonder, for in sooth
The thing seemed full of mysteries.
"Now who art thou that dar'st to raise
Mine image in the wilderness?
Is it for worship and for praise?
What is thine object? speak, confess."

"Oh Master, unto thee I came
To learn thy science. Name or pelf
I had not, so was driven with shame,
And here I learn all by myself.
But still as Master thee revere,
For who so great in archery!
Lo, all my inspiration here,
And all my knowledge is from thee."

"If I am Master, now thou hast
Finished thy course, give me my due.
Let all the past, be dead and past,
Henceforth be ties between us new."

"All that I have, O Master mine,
All I shall conquer by my skill,
Gladly shall I to thee resign,
Let me but know thy gracious will."

"Is it a promise?" "Yea, I swear
So long as I have breath and life
To give thee all thou wilt." "Beware!
Rash promise ever ends in strife."
"Thou art my Master—ask! oh ask!
From thee my inspiration came,
Thou canst not set too hard a task,
Nor aught refuse I, free from blame."

"If it be so—Arjuna hear!"
Arjuna and the youth were dumb,
"For thy sake, loud I ask and clear,
Give me, O youth, thy right-hand thumb.
I promised in my faithfulness
No equal ever shall there be
To thee, Arjuna—and I press
For this sad recompense—for thee."

Glanced the sharp knife one moment high,
The severed thumb was on the sod,
There was no tear in Buttoo's eye,
He left the matter with his God.
"For this"—said Dronacharjya—"Fame
Shall sound thy praise from sea to sea,
And men shall ever link thy name
With Self-help, Truth, and Modesty."

SINDHU

Part I

DEEP in the forest shades there dwelt
A *Muni* and his wife;
Blind, gray-haired, weak, they hourly felt
Their slender hold on life.

No friends had they, no help or stay,
Except an only boy,
A bright-eyed child, his laughter gay,
Their leaf-hut filled with joy.

Attentive, duteous, loving, kind,
Thoughtful, sedate, and calm,
He waited on his parents blind,
Whose days were like a psalm.

He roamed the woods for luscious fruits,
He brought them water pure,
He cooked their simple mess of roots,
Content to live obscure.

To fretful questions, answers mild
He meekly ever gave,
If they reproved, he only smiled,
He loved to be their slave.

Not that to him they were austere,
But age is peevish still,
Dear to their hearts he was—so dear,
That none his place might fill.

They called him Sindhu, and his name
Was ever on their tongue,
And he, nor cared for wealth nor fame,
Who dwelt his own among.

A belt of *Bela*-trees hemmed round
The cottage small and rude,
If peace on earth was ever found
'Twas in that solitude.

PART II

GREAT Dasarath, the King of Oudh,
Whom all men love and fear,
With elephants and horses proud
Went forth to hunt the deer.

O gallant was the long array!
Pennons and plumes were seen,
And swords that mirrored back the day,
And spears and axes keen.

Rang trump, and conch, and piercing fife,
Woke Echo from her bed!
The solemn woods with sounds were rife
As on the pageant sped.

Hundreds, nay thousands, on they went!
The wild beasts fled away!
Deer ran in herds, and wild boars spent
Became an easy prey.

Whirring the peacocks from the brake
With Argus wings arose,
Wild swans abandoned pool and lake
For climes beyond the snows.

From tree to tree the monkeys sprung,
Unharmed and unpursued,
As louder still the trumpets rung
And startled all the wood.

The porcupines and such small game
Unnoted fled at will,
The weasel only caught to tame
From fissures in the hill.

Slunk light the tiger from the bank,
But sudden turned to bay!
When he beheld the serried rank
That barred his tangled way.

Uprooting fig-trees on their path,
And trampling shrubs and flowers,
Wild elephants, in fear and wrath,
Burst through, like moving towers.

Lowering their horns in crescents grim
Whene'er they turned about,
Retreated into coverts dim
The bisons' fiercer rout.

And in this mimic game of war
In bands dispersed and passed
The royal train—some near, some far,
As day closed in at last.

Where was the king? He left his friends
At mid-day, it was known,
And now that evening fast descends
Where was he? All alone.

Curving, the river formed a lake,
Upon whose bank he stood,
No noise the silence there to break,
Or mar the solitude.

Upon the glassy surface fell
The last beams of the day,
Like fiery darts, that lengthening swell,
As breezes wake and play.

Osiers and willows on the edge
And purple buds and red,
Leant down—and 'mid the pale green sedge
The lotus raised its head.

And softly, softly, hour by hour
Light faded, and a veil
Fell over tree, and wave, and flower,
On came the twilight pale.

Deeper and deeper grew the shades,
Stars glimmered in the sky,
The nightingale along the glades
Raised her preluding cry.

What is that momentary flash?
A gleam of silver scales
Reveals the *Mahseer;*—then a splash,
And calm again prevails.

As darkness settled like a pall
The eye would pierce in vain,
The fireflies gemmed the bushes all,
Like fiery drops of rain.

Pleased with the scene—and knowing not
Which way, alas! to go,
The monarch lingered on the spot—
The lake spread bright below.

He lingered, when—oh hark! oh hark
What sound salutes his ear!
A roebuck drinking in the dark,
Not hunted, nor in fear.

Straight to the stretch his bow he drew,
That bow ne'er missed its aim,
Whizzing the deadly arrow flew,
Ear-guided, on the game!

Ah me! What means this?—Hark, a cry,
A feeble human wail,
"Oh God!" it said—"I die—I die,
Who'll carry home the pail?"

Startled, the monarch forward ran,
And then there met his view
A sight to freeze in any man
The warm blood coursing true.

A child lay dying on the grass,
A pitcher by his side,
Poor Sindhu was the child, alas!
His parents' stay and pride.

His bow and quiver down to fling,
And lift the wounded boy,
A moment's work was with the king.
Not dead—that was a joy!

He placed the child's head on his lap,
And 'ranged the blinding hair,
The blood welled fearful from the gap
On neck and bosom fair.

He dashed cold water on the face,
He chafed the hands, with sighs,
Till sense revived, and he could trace
Expression in the eyes.

Then mingled with his pity, fear—
In all this universe
What is so dreadful as to hear
A Brahman's dying curse!

So thought the king, and on his brow
The beads of anguish spread,
And Sindhu, fully conscious now,
The anguish plainly read.

"What dost thou fear, O mighty king?
For sure a king thou art!
Why should thy bosom anguish wring?
No crime was in thine heart!

Unwittingly the deed was done;
It is my destiny,
O fear not thou, but pity one
Whose fate is thus to die.

No curses, no!—I bear no grudge,
Not thou my blood hast spilt,
Lo! here before the unseen Judge,
Thee I absolve from guilt.

The iron, red-hot as it burns,
Burns those that touch it too,
Not such my nature—for it spurns,
Thank God, the like to do.

Because I suffer, should I give
Thee, king, a needless pain?
Ah, no! I die, but may'st thou live,
And cleansed from every stain!"

Struck with these words, and doubly grieved
At what his hands had done,
The monarch wept, as weeps bereaved
A man his only son.

"Nay, weep not so," resumed the child,
"But rather let me say
My own sad story, sin-defiled,
And why I die to-day!

Picking a living in our sheaves,
And happy in their loves,
Near, 'mid a peepul's quivering leaves,
There lived a pair of doves.

Never were they two separate,
And lo, in idle mood,
I took a sling and ball, elate
In wicked sport and rude—

And killed one bird—it was the male,
Oh cruel deed and base!
The female gave a plaintive wail
And looked me in the face!

The wail and sad reproachful look
In plain words seemed to say,
A widowed life I cannot brook,
The forfeit thou must pay.

What was my darling's crime that thou
Him wantonly shouldst kill?
The curse of blood is on thee now,
Blood calls for red blood still.

And so I die—a bloody death—
But not for this I mourn,
To feel the world pass with my breath
I gladly could have borne,

But for my parents, who are blind,
And have no other stay—
This, this, weighs sore upon my mind,
And fills me with dismay.

Upon the eleventh day of the moon
They keep a rigorous fast,
All yesterday they fasted; soon
For water and repast

They shall upon me feebly call!
Ah, must they call in vain?
Bear thou the pitcher, friend—'tis all
I ask—down that steep lane."

He pointed—ceased—then sudden died!
The king took up the corpse,
And with the pitcher slowly hied,
Attended by Remorse,

Down the steep lane—unto the hut
Girt round with *Bela*-trees;
Gleamed far a light—the door not shut
Was open to the breeze.

PART III

"OH why does not our child return?
Too long he surely stays."—
Thus to the *Muni*, blind and stern,
His partner gently says.

"For fruits and water when he goes
He never stays so long,
Oh can it be, beset by foes,
He suffers cruel wrong?

Some distance he has gone, I fear,
A more circuitous round—
Yet why should he? The fruits are near,
The river near our bound.

I die of thirst—it matters not
If Sindhu be but safe,
What if he leave us, and this spot,
Poor birds in cages chafe.

Peevish and fretful oft we are—
Ah, no—that cannot be:
Of our blind eyes he is the star,
Without him, what were we?

Too much he loves us to forsake,
But something ominous,
Here in my heart, a dreadful ache,
Says, he is gone from us.

Why do my bowels for him yearn,
What ill has crossed his path?
Blind, helpless, whither shall we turn,
Or how avert the wrath?

Lord of my soul—what means my pain?
This horrid terror—like
Some cloud that hides a hurricane;
Hang not, O lightning—strike!"

Thus while she spake, the king drew near
With haggard look and wild,
Weighed down with grief, and pale with fear,
Bearing the lifeless child.

Rustled the dry leaves 'neath his foot,
And made an eerie sound,
A neighboring owl began to hoot,
All else was still around.

At the first rustle of the leaves
The *Muni* answered clear,
"Lo, here he is—oh wherefore grieves
Thy soul, my partner dear?"

The words distinct, the monarch heard,
He could no further go,
His nature to its depths was stirred,
He stopped in speechless woe.

No steps advanced—the sudden pause
Attention quickly drew,
Rolled sightless orbs to learn the cause,
But, hark!—the steps renew.

"Where art thou, darling—why so long
Hast thou delayed to-night?
We die of thirst—we are not strong,
This fasting kills outright.

Speak to us, dear one—only speak,
And calm our idle fears,
Where hast thou been, and what to seek?
Have pity on these tears."

With head bent low the monarch heard,
Then came a cruel throb
That tore his heart—still not a word,
Only a stifled sob!

"It is not Sindhu—who art thou?
And where is Sindhu gone?
There's blood upon thy hands—avow!"
"There is."—"Speak on, speak on."

The dead child in their arms he placed,
And briefly told his tale,
The parents their dead child embraced,
And kissed his forehead pale.

"Our hearts are broken. Come, dear wife,
On earth no more we dwell;
Now welcome Death, and farewell Life,
And thou, O king, farewell!

We do not curse thee, God forbid
But to my inner eye
The future is no longer hid,
Thou too shalt like us die.

Die—for a son's untimely loss!
Die—with a broken heart!
Now help us to our bed of moss,
And let us both depart."

Upon the moss he laid them down,
And watched beside the bed;
Death gently came and placed a crown
Upon each reverend head.

Where the Sarayu's waves dash free
Against a rocky bank,
The monarch had the corpses three
Conveyed by men of rank;

There honored he with royal pomp
Their funeral obsequies—
Incense and sandal, drum and tromp,
And solemn sacrifice.

What is the sequel of the tale?
How died the king?—Oh man,
A prophet's words can never fail—
Go, read the Ramayan.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

NEAR HASTINGS

Near Hastings, on the shingle-beach,
We loitered at the time
When ripens on the wall the peach,
The autumn's lovely prime.
Far off—the sea and sky seemed blent,
The day was wholly done,
The distant town its murmurs sent,
Strangers—we were alone.

We wandered slow; sick, weary, faint,
Then one of us sat down,
No nature hers, to make complaint;—
The shadows deepened brown.
A lady past—she was not young,
But oh! her gentle face
No painter-poet ever sung,
Or saw such saintlike grace.

She passed us—then she came again,
Observing at a glance
That we were strangers; one, in pain—
Then asked—Were we from France?
We talked awhile—some roses red
That seemed as wet with tears,
She gave my sister, and she said,
God bless you both, my dears!"

Sweet were the roses—sweet and full,
And large as lotus flowers
That in our own wide tanks we cull
To deck our Indian bowers.

But sweeter was the love that gave
Those flowers to one unknown,
I think that He who came to save
The gift a debt will own.

The lady's name I do not know,
Her face no more may see,
But yet, oh yet I love her so!
Blest, happy, may she be!
Her memory will not depart,
Though grief my years should shade,
Still bloom her roses in my heart!
And they shall never fade!

FRANCE

1870

Not dead—oh no—she cannot die!
Only a swoon, from loss of blood!
Levite England passes her by,
Help, Samaritan! None is nigh;
Who shall staunch me this sanguine flood?

'Range the brown hair, it blinds her eyne,
Dash cold water over her face!
Drowned in her blood, she makes no sign,
Give her a draught of generous wine.
None heed, none hear, to do this grace.

Head of the human column, thus
Ever in swoon wilt thou remain?
Thought, Freedom, Truth, quenched ominous
Whence then shall Hope arise for us,
Plunged in the darkness all again.

No, she stirs!—There's a fire in her glance,
Ware, oh ware of that broken sword!
What, dare ye for an hour's mischance,
Gather around her, jeering France,
Attila's own exultant horde?

Lo, she stands up—stands up e'en now,
Strong once more for the battle-fray,
Gleams bright the star, that from her brow
Lightens the world. Bow, nations, bow,
Let her again lead on the way!

THE TREE OF LIFE

Broad daylight, with a sense of weariness!
Mine eyes were closed, but I was not asleep,
My hand was in my father's, and I felt
His presence near me. Thus we often passed
In silence, hour by hour. What was the need
Of interchanging words when every thought
That in our hearts arose, was known to each,
And every pulse kept time? Suddenly there shone
A strange light, and the scene as sudden changed.
I was awake:—It was an open plain
Illimitable—stretching, stretching—oh, so far!
And o'er it that strange light—a glorious light
Like that the stars shed over fields of snow
In a clear, cloudless, frosty winter night,
Only intenser in its brilliance calm.
And in the midst of that vast plain, I saw,
For I was wide awake—it was no dream,
A tree with spreading branches and with leaves
Of divers kinds—dead silver and live gold,
Shimmering in radiance that no words may tell!
Beside the tree an Angel stood; he plucked
A few small sprays, and bound them round my head.
Oh, the delicious touch of those strange leaves!
No longer throbbed my brows, no more I felt
The fever in my limbs—"And oh," I cried,
"Bind too my father's forehead with these leaves."
One leaf the Angel took and therewith touched
His forehead, and then gently whispered "Nay!"
Never, oh never had I seen a face
More beautiful than that Angel's, or more full
Of holy pity and of love divine.

Wondering I looked awhile—then, all at once
Opened my tear-dimmed eyes—When lo! the light
Was gone—the light as of the stars when snow
Lies deep upon the ground. No more, no more,
Was seen the Angel's face. I only found
My father watching patient by my bed,
And holding in his own, close-prest, my hand.

MADAME THÉRÈSE

Written on the fly-leaf of Erckmann-Chatrian's novel, entitled, "Madame Thérèse."

Wavered the foremost soldiers—then fell back.
Fallen was their leader, and loomed right before
The sullen Prussian cannon, grim and black,
With lighted matches waving. Now, once more,
Patriots and veterans!—Ah! 'Tis in vain!
Back they recoil, though bravest of the brave;
No human troops may stand that murderous rain;
But who is this—that rushes to a grave?

It is a woman—slender, tall, and brown!
She snatches up the standard as it falls—
In her hot haste tumbles her dark hair down,
And to the drummer-boy aloud she calls
To beat the charge; then forwards on the *pont*
They dash together;—who could bear to see
A woman and a child, thus Death confront,
Nor burn to follow them to victory?

I read the story and my heart beats fast!
Well might all Europe quail before thee, France,
Battling against oppression! Years have passed,
Yet of that time men speak with moistened glance.
Va-nu-pieds! When rose high your Marseillaise
Man knew his rights to earth's remotest bound,
And tyrants trembled. Yours alone the praise!
Ah, had a Washington but then been found!

SONNET

A sea of foliage girds our garden round,
But not a sea of dull unvaried green,
Sharp contrasts of all colors here are seen;
The light-green graceful tamarinds abound
Amid the mango clumps of green profound,
And palms arise, like pillars gray, between;
And o'er the quiet pools the seemuls lean,
Red—red, and startling like a trumpet's sound.
But nothing can be lovelier than the ranges
Of bamboos to the eastward, when the moon
Looks through their gaps, and the white lotus changes
Into a cup of silver. One might swoon
Drunken with beauty then, or gaze and gaze
On a primeval Eden, in amaze.

SONNET

Love came to Flora asking for a flower
That would of flowers be undisputed queen,
The lily and the rose, long, long had been
Rivals for that high honor. Bards of power
Had sung their claims. "The rose can never tower
Like the pale lily with her Juno mien"—
"But is the lily lovelier?" Thus between
Flower-factions rang the strife in Psyche's bower.
"Give me a flower delicious as the rose
And stately as the lily in her pride"—
"But of what color?"—"Rose-red," Love first chose,
Then prayed—"No, lily-white—or, both provide;"
And Flora gave the lotus, "rose-red" dyed,
And "lily-white"—the queenliest flower that blows.

OUR CASUARINA-TREE

Like a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live. But gallantly
The giant wears the scarf, and flowers are hung
In crimson clusters all the boughs among,
Whereon all day are gathered bird and bee;
And oft at nights the garden overflows
With one sweet song that seems to have no close,
Sung darkling from our tree, while men repose,

When first my casement is wide open thrown
At dawn, my eyes delighted on it rest;
Sometimes, and most in winter—on its crest
A gray baboon sits statue-like alone
Watching the sunrise; while on lower boughs
His puny offspring leap about and play;
And far and near kokilas hail the day;
And to their pastures wend our sleepy cows;
And in the shadow, on the broad tank cast
By that hoar tree, so beautiful and vast,
The water-lilies spring, like snow enmassed.

But not because of its magnificence
Dear is the Casuarina to my soul:
Beneath it we have played; though years may roll,
O sweet companions, loved with love intense,
For your sakes, shall the tree be ever dear!
Blent with your images, it shall arise
In memory, till the hot tears blind mine eyes!
What is that dirge-like murmur that I hear
Like the sea breaking on a shingle-beach?
It is the tree's lament, an eerie speech,
That haply to the unknown land may reach.

Unknown, yet well-known to the eye of faith!
Ah, I have heard that wail far, far away

In distant lands, by many a sheltered bay,
When slumbered in his cave the water-wraith
And the waves gently kissed the classic shore
Of France or Italy, beneath the moon,
When earth lay trancèd in a dreamless swoon:
And every time the music rose—before
Mine inner vision rose a form sublime,
Thy form, O Tree, as in my happy prime
I saw thee, in my own loved native clime.

Therefore I fain would consecrate a lay
Unto thy honor, Tree, beloved of those
Who now in blessed sleep, for aye, repose,
Dearer than life to me, alas! were they!
May'st thou be numbered when my days are done
With deathless trees—like those in Borrowdale,
Under whose awful branches lingered pale
"Fear, trembling Hope, and Death, the skeleton,
And Time, the shadow;" and though weak the verse
That would thy beauty fain, oh fain rehearse,
May Love defend thee from Oblivion's curse.