



jit, Viśvajit and Aptōryama; and every one of them, in strict conformity with the rules laid down for it and with heart-felt good will to the performer.

Thus did Daśaratha perform this grand sacrifice, revealed to the world by Brahma, successfully and without omitting the least detail; and with a glad heart did he present the Hōtā, the Adhwaryū, the Brahma and the Udgātā with his dominions on the East, West, South and North respectively. They accepted them joyfully and said to the king, "Your Majesty! religious observances, the study of the Holy Writ and the teaching thereof come easier to us and are more congenial than the government of kingdoms. What shall we do with them? You are fitted for the task and God has specially placed you in the world therefor. So, take these back and give us in return gold and gems, horses and cattle." And Daśaratha gave to every one of them ten lacs of kine, ten crores of gold coins, and four of silver, which they took to Rishyasringa and Vasishtha to equitably divide among them. They received their shares gladly and said to the king, "We are more than satisfied."

Daśaratha distributed untold wealth among the poor; and a Brāhmaṇa, who made bold to approach him with a request for something more, was rewarded with the diamond bracelet on his arm. With tears of joy coursing down his aged cheeks, the monarch reverently touched the ground with his forehead before the assembled multitudes, whose contentment and joy knew no bounds, while the priests and the Brāhmaṇas spoke their heart-felt blessings in the grand and majestic chants of the Vēdic hymns.

The heart of the old king danced with joy in that he had successfully performed the famous horse-sacrifice, so difficult for ordinary monarchs. It burnt away the sins that stood in the way of his being blessed with an offspring and opened to him wide the gates of heaven. He then approached Rishyasringa and prayed to him



THE HORSE-SACRIFICE BEGUN

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with joined palms, "Holy Sir! deign to point out to me the means whereby I could have a child to cheer my old age."

"Let not thy noble heart be cast down," replied the sage. "Four sons will be born unto you, whose eternal glory will illumine your noble line. And mine be the care to bring about the happy event."



CHAPTER XV.

THE GODS TAKE REFUGE WITH THE LORD.

Then, Rishyaśringa, whose mind was capacious enough to receive and retain the numerous Śākhas of the Vēdas and who was a thorough master of the mysteries connected therewith, after long and earnest thought, hit upon the most effective method of realising the king's wishes. With a glad face he turned to him and said, "Now shall I perform for you an Ishti consecrated by the Atharvāna Mantras, that will not fail to get you a son." And in the course of the rite, he made an offering in the fire, accompanied by powerful Vēdic Mantras.

Meanwhile, the various Angelic Presences that came down to the horse-sacrifice to receive their portions of the offerings, approached their chief, the Lotus-born One, and said, "Lord! A Rākshasa, Rāvaṇa by name, has won your favour by his wonderful austerities and has been blessed with many mighty boons in consequence; and *we*, poor souls, have to pay for it. Bound by our respect for the giver of those boons, we have to put up, without a murmur, with his unheard-of cruelties. The three worlds tremble at his name; he will, in no time, drive away from their thrones Indra and the other Regents of the spheres and occupy them himself. Strong in the strength of his boons, he bids defiance to every one, sages and Brāhmaṇas, Yakshas and Gandharvas, Dēvas and Asuras and grinds them low. The Sun draws in his heat when he shines on the Demon and adjusts his warmth to his taste; the Wind-God is afraid to blow hard through his gardens, lest the flowers therein should fall off the trees and creepers and anger Rāvaṇa when he is disporting himself there; the roaring Ocean with his mutinous waves, stands tongue-tied with fear at his approach; his fierce looks strike dire terror into our hearts and we drag on lives of misery and fear. Seek thou some means to relieve us from this living terror."



"Shining Ones!" replied Brahma, "the wicked wretch prayed of me immortality from the Dēvas, the Gandharvas and the Rakshasas and *that* I granted him. But, fortunately for you, he has omitted to ask it from men, as being too far beneath his fear and notice. *There* is his weak point and he should be made to meet his death at the hands of man."

The hearts of the sages and the gods danced for very joy at this glad news; and they rejoiced as if the hour of their deliverance was already at hand.

Then there appeared before their delighted eyes the Lord Vishnu, the ruler of the Universe and the living God in the hearts of all beings. In His supreme effulgence stood He, His face resplendent with the thought that the time had come for Him to destroy the wicked and bring peace and comfort to the hearts of the good and the righteous. He ever bears in His hands the conch and the discus, to extend His protection to those that take refuge in Him. Brahma advanced to reverence Him, his mind actively engaged with the prayer he meant to place before Him. Then the Sons of Light hymned Him high and with bent heads and joined palms cried, "We pray Thee that Thou deign to be born as four sons unto Daśaratha, of righteous heart and saintly life—the Lord of Ayōdhyā, from whom none ever ask in vain. Do Thou take human form through his three queens, who are even as the mortal embodiments of Hri, Sri and Kirti, and destroy the impious One, even Ravana. He is the scourge and the terror of all beings and is not to meet his death at the hands of any but man. Proud of his might and prouder still of the boons he had won of Brahma, he tramples on all of us, gods and sages, Yakshas and Gandharvas, Kinnaras and men alike. The lovely Apsarasas that disport themselves in the charming groves of our Nandana are the special objects of his persecutions. We, the denizens of the three worlds, pray his death at Thy hands and take our refuge in Thee. Thou art our only stay and support, and



we pray that Thou wilt be pleased to come down on Earth to destroy the wicked wights, Rāvaṇa, Indrajit, Lavaṇa and certain wicked Gandharvas."

Then, unto the expectant Brahma and the attendant celestial host, spake the World-honoured One, Viṣṇu, the Lord of Lords, "Fear not, my children. All good betide you. I shall come down among men as the son of Daśaratha and shall slay in dreadful battle Rāvaṇa, that terror of yours and of every devout and virtuous soul; nay, his sons, grandsons, friends, and kinsmen even unto the last remove. And mortal years 11000 shall I reign over the Earth, restoring Law and Order."

He promised them safety from their enemy and a speedy deliverance to their miseries; and resolved to manifest Himself as the sons of Daśaratha, whose saintly virtues attracted Him to take birth in his family. Far, far above the mortal changes known as birth and death, Himself the Goal and the End of all desires and efforts, human and divine, yet He made up His mind to limit His illimitable essence and come down into this dark and sinful world of ours, that the 'wicked might cease from troubling and the weary be at rest.'

Then, the Shining Ones, the Gandharvas, the Rudras and the Apsarasas, sang his divine glory and repeated their prayer, "Soul of Compassion! Lord of infinite Mercy! save us from the wrath and oppression of the terrible Rāvaṇa; slay him in battle dire, him and his kin, him and his countless hosts. Naturally endowed with no inconsiderable degree of pride and might, he has become insufferably so, through the boons conferred on him by Brahma. The good and the righteous cry out against him and raise tear-dimmed eyes and trembling hands in mute appeal to Thee for deliverance and protection. Thy work accomplished, come Thou back, light of heart, unto Thy radiant seat on high, far beyond the utmost dreams of poor we, unto Vaikuṇṭha, the eternal world where desire is not nor hatred."



CHAPTER XVI.

THE DIVINE PÂYASA.

To which the Lord Nārāyana replied in feigned ignorance (what is it He knows not!) "Well, my children, I shall do even as you wish. But I do not see clearly the easiest and most effective method of bringing about his death. You have thought over it long and deeply, and may be you can suggest the best course."

The Dēvas bowed low before the Eternal One and rejoined, "Lord! the sinful wretch contrived to win the favour of Brahma, the foremost and the best of us all; who, pleased by his terrible austerities, granted him immunity from death at the hands of every one in all the worlds, above and below. But, he has, in the height of his contempt, omitted men from his list. Safe, through his boons, from every object in the universe, as he fondly thinks, his pride is equalled but by his cruelties. The groans of the insulted Dēvas and the shrieks of the ravished damsels cry out against him and the bleached skeletons of holy sages, whom he had murdered in cold blood. *Man and man alone* is his fate; and from *him* he meets his death. Do Thou take human form and slay him in battle dire."

Then said the Lord Viṣṇu, "I shall come down among men, as the son of Daśaratha, who is even now performing a holy rite to get a boy in his old age." He ended and having given leave to the assembled celestial hosts to depart, vanished then and there, lauded by the rejoicing Dēvas.

Soon after, Rishyaśringa, in the course of the rite he was conducting, made an offering unto the Fire Âhavantya, when there rose out of it a radiant Presence of vast proportions. Like a towering peak he stood; and the blazing Fire or the noonday sun was as nothing before the blinding glory of that mighty One. His face was fiery red



and the hair upon it was of the hue of molten gold, even as the tawny mane of the monarch of the forest. Clad in robes of reddish black, his beautifully proportioned limbs were adorned with lovely ornaments. Of inconceivable might and power, even as the royal tiger in the flush of his strength and fierceness, his voice sounded as the great war drums that fill the warrior's heart with fire and energy. His hands were closed around a golden vessel of exquisite workmanship, silver-covered, as lovingly as ever a lover's arms were twined round the neck of his beloved; and this was full of divine Pâyasa. He turned to the king and said, "I am a man sent to you by the Four-faced One, Brahma."

Dasaratha replied with folded hands, "Lord! Hast thy journey hither been a pleasant one? What does my lord want with his servant?"

"Only this," said the Radiant One, "the gods are pleased with thee and thy Horse-sacrifice and Putrêshthi and have sent thee this Pâyasa. It confers glory and weal and, more than anything else, the son you so much yearn for. Accept it; let your queens partake of it and sons four shall be thine. This is what you have toiled for, ever so long, through horse-sacrifice and vows innumerable."

"Thy commands shall be obeyed," replied the king, in awe and reverence; and receiving the Pâyasa sent him by the Dêvas, he bowed low unto the Divine Messenger and went round him in respect; and his heart leaped for very joy, even as that of a beggar that has come upon a precious treasure. And the mighty Being, having accomplished his mission, disappeared into the fire from which he sprang.

Thereafter, the king concluded the rite, and retiring to his apartments, said to his queens, "This divine Pâyasa, the gift of the celestials, will bear you sons. Do you partake of it." And their faces shone thereat, even as the sky illuminated by the rays of the autumn moon.



He then distributed it among them thus:—One-half to Kausalyâ, one-fourth to Sumitrâ and one-eighth to Kaikêyi. But, to give the remaining one-eighth to her would be to place her on a level with Sumitrâ, her elder, and that should never be; so he divided it equally between the two. The queens were highly satisfied with his distribution of the Pâyasa and deemed themselves blessed in being allowed to partake of it. They ate of it and shone brighter throughout the period of pregnancy than the smokeless fire or the brilliant sun. And the old king, saw it; his heart was lifted of its weight of sorrow and he rejoiced even as the great Indra, honoured in heaven by the Siddhas and the Sages.



CHAPTER XVII

THE COMING DOWN OF THE GODS.

When the Lord Vishnu had taken the preliminary steps to come down as the son of Dāsaratha, the Lotus-born One, from whom the future is not hid, said to the Dēvas, "The Lord goes down among men in pursuance of His promise to us and for our good. Send ye down, from your essences, sons to assist Him in His fight with Rāvana; choose ye fit vehicles among the Apsarasas and Gandharvas and beget sons ape-like in form. Capable of assuming any shape at will they shall be masters of the arts of illusion, like unto the Wind-God in speed and unto the Supreme Vishnu in might, invulnerable and unconquerable, with the strength of fierce lions in them and endued with the terrible energy of all the Astras, immortal, even as the celestials who have drunk of Ambrosia, intelligent, conversant with every rule of morality and skilful in adopting the means to the ends.

"Once, when I indulged in a deep yawn, I brought forth a mighty bear, Jāmbavan by name, of course with an eye to future contingencies."

And in cheerful obedience to his commands, the sages, the Siddhas, the Vidyādharas, the Uragas, the Chāranas and the other celestial orders, brought forth sons of their own essence, monkeys that roamed the woods. The great Indra gave birth to Vāli, the monarch of the monkeys, of vast proportions even as the Mount Mahendra. The Sun-God begat Sugriva; Bṛhaspati begat Tāra, the wisest and the foremost of the monkey host; Kubera begat Gandhamadhana, like unto him in wealth; Visvakarma begat Nala; Agni begat Nila, radiant even as his sire and excelling the other monkeys by his glory, splendour and valor; the handsome Aswins begat Mainda and Dwivida, no less beautiful than their sires; Varuna begat Sushēna; Parjanya, the God of Rain, begat Sarabha, of vast strength;



Vajra beget Hanumân, like unto Garuda in speed and of adamantine body, impervious even to the Vajra.

Thus, countless myriads of apes, baboons, monkeys and bears came down on Earth to assist the Lord in exterminating Râvana and his wicked brood. Their strength was immeasurable; they could take any form they liked; of vast bulk like unto Mêru or Mandâra, resembling their sires in shape and height, some were born of monkey mothers, some of bears, some of Apsarasas, some of Vidyâdhara maidens and some of Nâgas and Gandharvas; some were born of celestial fathers, some of sages, some of Gandharvas, some of Garuda and the feathered race, some of Yakshas, some of Vâsuki and the others of Nâgas; some of Siddhas, some of Vidyâdharas and some of Uragas.

Proud in their strength even as lions and tigers, fighting with rocks, trees, teeth and claws, they could shatter the strongest tree and uproot the hugest mountain; their speed was such that the mighty Lord of the Rivers, was shaken to his very bottom; with a blow of their feet they could rend the solid Earth in twain; they could lightly leap across the vast oceans, course along the sky and catch by the hair the fleet-footed clouds; they could fly away in sport with huge elephants that range the forests in the pride of their strength; their roars could cause the most powerful birds to drop down dead from their dizzy home among the clouds.

These mighty beings ranged the earth and the sky; and their seed grew and grew by hundreds and by thousands and covered the face of the globe. Some of them lived along the sides of Rikshavân and other mountains, in dark forests and lonely woods, on the banks of charming lakes and swift-coursing rivers, on the high hills and in the low vales.

All of them recognised as their monarchs, the brothers Vâli and Sugriva, the king and the heir-apparent, born of Indra and Sûrya; their leaders were Nala, Nîla, Hanumân



and other mighty monkeys. Vâli extended his powerful arm over them and under its shadow lived, in peace and prosperity, the high-minded and valiant apes and monkeys, bears and baboons. And these mighty beings, of various shapes and features, and of vast and fearful bulk, like unto huge mountain peaks or cloud-banks, came down into the world to help the Lord in His noble task and darkened the broad bosom of the Earth, and its numerous mountains and valleys, hills and dales, forests and woodlands.



CHAPTER XVIII

THE COMING OF THE LORD

The various celestial hosts that came down to receive their offerings during the Horse-sacrifice departed to their respective worlds after the *Ishti* was over.

The king and his queens freed themselves from the consecratory vow; and he sent away, with all honors, the many kings that had graced him with their presence. They saluted *Vasishtha* and the other sages and left for their respective kingdoms, their troops flashing with gold and gems and gay apparel, the royal gift of their noble host.

Dasaratha returned to his capital, in the company of *Vasishtha* and his brother sages, his queens, his armies and his servants following him in their countless conveyances. Then *Rishyasringa* and his wife took leave of *Dasaratha* and along with them *Rômapâda*. Having dismissed his guests, the king abode in his capital, his hopes realised and his thoughts ever intent on the approaching birth of his sons.

Twice six months had rolled away since the great sacrifice was over and, in the first month of the New Year, on the ninth day of the bright fortnight, the Lord of the worlds chose to take human form and sent down half of His essence as the son of *Kausalyâ* (thenceforth to be known as *Râma*), the world-honored One, the crowning glory of the grand line of *Ikshwâku*, and the sum of all perfections. The constellation *Punarvasu*, of which *Aditi* was the regent, was chosen to preside at his birth. The Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn were in ascension in their respective houses. Aries, Capricornus, Cancer, Pisces and the Libra, Jupiter and the Moon were in conjunction; the rising sign was Cancer. And *Kausalyâ* shone with unparalleled effulgence, even as *Aditi*



when she gave birth to Indra, the lord of the Shining Ones, the Vajra-wielder.

Bharata was born of Kaikēyi, under the constellation Pushya, when Pisces was the rising sign. He had in him one-eighth of the Divine Essence, and was the embodiment of every excellence, and of never-failing prowess.

Under the asterism Aślēsha, when Cancer was the rising sign, were born unto Sumitṛa two sons, Lakshmana, and Saṭrughna, valiant and well-skilled in the science of arms, human and divine. They were twins; Lakshmana had in him one-fourth and Saṭrughna one-eighth of the Divine Essence. Resembling in lustre the two asterisms Pūrva and Uttara Bhādrapada, they were beautifully matched.

Sweetly sang the Gandharvas, and gaily danced the Apsarasas; the celestial drums beat merrily and the flowers of Heaven rained on Earth when the Divine Four came down upon it. The capital and the kingdom was one scene of mirth and jollity; and it was a happy day. The high roads were crowded with bright citizens, dancers and dancing masters; the streets echoed to gay songs and sweet musical instruments, and the loud plaudits of bards, genealogists and heralds. The old king, beside himself with joy, gave away untold wealth and kine to Brāhmanas and rich presents to the bards and minstrels.

On the thirteenth day of their birth the holy Vasishtha joyfully gave them names. The son of Kausalyā he called Rāma; Kaikēyi's son answered to Bharata; and the twins from the womb of Sumitṛa, he named the elder Lakshmana, and the younger Saṭrughna. On that occasion the king caused numerous Brāhmanas to be fed, both in his capital and in his kingdom and gave away costly gems and rich gifts.

In due time, the boys passed through the sacraments laid down for the twice-born, Annaprāsana, Choula and Upanayana.



Of them, Rāma the eldest, who towered above the rest, was a perennial source of delight to his sire and even as the Lotus-born One, the darling of all beings. Very soon they mastered the Vēdas and the Vedāṅgas ; brave and wise, endowed with every virtue, they were ever intent upon doing good to others. Among them, Rāma was the brightest and shone radiant. Of unfailing powers, a source of delight unto the world, even as the charming Queen of Night ; the most expert in training horses and elephants and in chariot races ; master of the Science of the Bow, he was withal ever assiduous in attending upon his parents and ministering to their least comforts.

Lakshmaṇa, blessed with every perfection and excellence, was ever devoted to his brother Rāma, the beloved of men ; the whole current of his thoughts, words and deeds set towards Rāma ; and *that* even from his very infancy. Sleep visited not the eyes of Rāma, the best of men, if Lakshmaṇa were not by ; he relished not his food, be it ever so delicious, if Lakshmaṇa was not there to share it with him. His right hand and his visible life currents he regarded Lakshmaṇa. When Rāma rode out to hunt, Lakshmaṇa ever accompanied him, bow in hand, to shield him from any harm. Śatrughna was unto Bharata what Lakshmaṇa was unto Rāma.

Daśaratha, surrounded by his four beloved and fortunate sons, shone even as the Four-faced Brahma among the Regents of the Spheres. His heart waxed glad to see them grow in wisdom, derived from the study of the arts and sciences ; to see them adorned with every perfection ; to mark their keen sense of shame, when, from heedlessness, their thoughts happened to go astray ; to see them proficient in every worldly affair ; to hear of their growing fame among men as prodigies of intellect ; and to observe their wonderful faculty of seeing before them into the future and act accordingly. The sons were not slow to note the love of their sire towards them ; they became more assiduous, if possible, in their studies of the science



of Ethics and sacred legendary lore and in the mastery of the bow, and ever served their sire joyfully.

Now, Daśaratha one day took deep counsel with his High Priest and his kinsmen about the approaching marriage of his boys ; when, unto him among his ministers, came all unexpected the great sage Viśvāmītra, of high spiritual lustre and said to the Wardens of the Gate, " Let the king know that Viśvāmītra, the son Gādhi is here to see him." In great fear and trepidation they ran in and informed the king that Viśvāmītra waited for an audience ; whereat, the king made haste to welcome the sage very carefully and humbly, even as Indra welcomes Brahma. His face shone with gladness at the sight of Viśvāmītra of stern austerities, and through Vasishtha he extended unto him all the rites of hospitality. Viśvāmītra graciously accepted the king's kindness and inquired after his welfare. " Art thou ever intent on gathering rare and valuable objects and increasing the collection ? Are thy kin and friends happy and the subjects in thy capital and kingdom ? Is thy treasury growing ? Are thy subject princes obedient and loyal to thee ? Art thou regular in thy sacrifice to the gods and other religious observances ? Dost thou duly acquit thyself of thy duties as a man and as a king ? Do thy guests receive hospitable entertainment at thy hands ? Dost thou make right use of the various methods of kingcraft ? " He then proceeded to enquire after the health and welfare of Vasishtha, Vāmaḍēva and the other sages. Pleased with his attentions to them, they proceeded to the audience chamber and took their usual seats.

Then Daśaratha, the great giver, approached the sage and with his hair standing on end through joy, exclaimed, " Holy One ! this kind visit of thine, which I never dared to dream of, gladdens my old heart more than if a mortal came by the Waters of Immortality ; more than welcome rains to parched deserts ; more than a son born to one in his old age, of his lawful wife ; more than



recovered treasure to the loser; more than the marriages of their children to fond parents. Has thy journey hither been a pleasant one? What shall I do to gratify thy wishes? Blessed am I, in that Heaven has sent me one than whom I can desire no fitter recipient. Fair is the day that brought thee here. It is now that my birth has borne fruit and this my long life here. As a royal sage, there was no wish of thine that thou didst not gratify; then, by dreadful austerities, thou becamest a Brahmarshi and thy heart knows no desire. Every way thou art an object of reverence and honor unto me. Thy visit here has washed away my sins and it is a wonder to me indeed, when I come to think of it. A sight of thy holy face has translated me to the regions of the Blessed. Allow me to perform thy behests and deserve thy grace. Art thou not a god unto me, a household deity? Thou hast come unto me only for my greatest good and thy visit has increased my religious merit. Hesitate not to acquaint me with the object of thy journey hither; *be it small or great I give you my royal word to accomplish it unto the least detail.*"

So in all humility and from a full heart, spoke Dasa-
ratha, born of ancestors who reckoned among them such famous men as Trisanku. The words fell sweet upon the ears of the noble sage and his heart was glad thereat.



CHAPTER XIX

VISVÂMITRA SEEKS RÂMA OF DÂSARATHA

To which, the saintly One, his heart dancing at the words of the great-souled king, replied, "Best of monarchs that thou art it becomes thee well, and no other in this world. It does great credit to the high ancestry to which thou belongest and to the holy sage Vasishtha, who is thy Guru. Promise to carry out what I have in mind; and when thou hast once promised, see you fail not at any cost to accomplish it to the utmost. At present, I am engaged in a holy rite with a special purpose; and two Rākshasas, able to assume any shape at will, are bent upon spoiling it. When I am about to close my rite, these two, Mārīchā and Subāhu, powerful and skilful, pour down showers of flesh and blood on the sacrificial altar and pollute it for ever. Thus annoyed and my purpose baffled, I came away weary and almost despairing. I cannot bring myself to direct my anger against them, and inflict a curse, for, the nature of the vow forbids it; so, I request thee to give me thy eldest son Râma, beautiful, valiant, and of resistless prowess. Protected by me, and by the force his innate energy as well, he is able to destroy these Rākshasas that afflict me. I will see that this enterprise brings him incalculable good and great glory, such as will be held in high esteem in the three worlds. The Rākshasas cannot stand before him even for a moment, and no one but Râma can destroy them. Full of extreme conceit at their valour, these wicked ones are no match for Râma; lo! the shadow of death is creeping upon them. Never allow the great love thou hast for thy sons to interfere with this momentous work. I swear to thee that the Rākshasas cannot escape him. I know the real Râma, the great-souled One of invincible might. Vasishtha, of high spiritual eminence, knows it too, and these



Holy sages that pass their time in stern austerities. If thou desirest to secure supreme renown in this world and unbounded righteousness in the next, send Râma along with me. If thy ministers give their consent to it, as also Vasishtha and the other saintly ones, send Râma along with me. I want him for ten days and no longer; for, by that time I will have finished my sacrifice. So, send along with me the handsome Râma, whom I so earnestly pray for. To speak the truth, he has no attachment to anything down here. See to it that the time for the performance of the sacrifice is not past. Arrange accordingly and allow no grief to take possession of thy heart."

Thus spake Visvâmitra, the great sage, to whom nothing was impossible. With a heavy heart Dâsarathâ listened to the request of the sage, which, though it conferred good on his son and was righteous in its nature, unnerved him completely. Pierced to the heart, the strong-minded king was overpowered with grief and tottered upon his throne.



CHAPTER XX

DASARATHA'S REPLY

The words of Viśvāmītra stunned him quite. For a long while he remained like one demented ; then, mastering himself with a mighty effort, in faltering accents he managed to reply. "Rāma, the darling of my heart, Rāma, with eyes lovely as the fresh-blown lotus leaves, is yet in his early teens. I dare not even dream of his being able to stand in battle against the mighty night-rangers. Countless millions of war-worn veterans call me their lord and master, each a host in himself. My warriors are valiant, covered with fame and versed in the use of every kind of weapon, human and divine. I shall put myself at their head and wipe out these Rākshasas. They are more competent to fight these demons, but ask me not Rāma. Here am I, ready to march against them, bow in hand, millions of tried soldiers at my back and fight for thee to my last breath. I promise thee I will myself go over there and see that thou accomplish thy vow safe and without any interruption ; but, I pray thee, ask not Rāma of me. He is yet a child. He has not yet finished his training. He knows not the strength and weakness of himself and of his enemies. He has never been yet in battle and his is not the might derived from the possession of celestial weapons. Knowest thou not that Rāma is entirely unfit to fight against these Rākshasas ? They never fight straight, but always take refuge in their arts of illusion. Take Rāma away from me and thou takest my very life. Nay, if thou art bent upon taking Rāma with thee, take me too and my numerous army, well appointed. This, my son, has gladdened my heart after sixty thousand years of disappointed hopes and fruitless grief. How canst thou have the heart to take away Rāma from me, the light of my eyes and the prop of my old age ? Knowest thou not that, of my four



sons, Rāma lies next to my heart? Need I tell thee that he is my first-born and the most steadfast in virtue? So, take not Rāma away from me. These, thy Rākshasas, who are they? Whose sons are they? What is their might? Wherein lies their strength? Under whose protection are they? How dost thou want Rāma to fight them? Tell me, for I will do it, how to render useless all their illusions; for thou hast me and my countless hosts to do thy bidding. Instruct me how I can withstand these Rākshasas, proud of their valour."

Then replied Visvāmītra, "May be, thou hast heard of a Rākshasa, Rāvaṇa by name, descended of the hoary Pulastya. The sage Viśravas is his father; he is own brother to Vaisravana, and monarch of all the Rākshasas on earth; immeasurable is his strength and matchless his might; gifted with wonderful boons from Brahma and with countless hosts of Rākshasas at his back, he grinds the three worlds beneath his heels. When he does not himself condescend to spoil the sacrifices, these, his creatures, Mārīcha and Subāhu, take his place and excel him in cruelty and wantonness."

Then said Dasaratha, with a faint heart: "Powerless am I to cope with that wicked one. Have pity on my child of tender years, oh, righteous Lord! Unfortunate that I am, thou art my Guru and my God. The Devas, the Dānavas, the Gandharvas, the Yakshas, the Nāgas and the Pannagas, cannot bear to look upon Rāvaṇa, terrible in battle; why speak of puny mortals such as we? Rāvaṇa absorbs, as it were, the strength and might of those that face him in battle; I dare not even dream of opposing him or his hosts, either alone or with my armies or with my sons. But, on no account will I part with my darling Rāma, beautiful as a god and a child in years, in experience, and in warfare. Mārīcha and Subāhu those sons of Sunda and Upasunda, are mighty and extremely skilled in fight. Born to a Yaksha woman, and best and foremost of the Daityas, they



are terrible in battle, even as the God of Death. They are set upon ruining thy sacrifice and never shall I send my son against them to certain destruction as it were. However, if thou so desirest it, I will call my friends around me and fight with any others but the two."

These words of Dasaratha, the ravings of a sorrow-laden heart, roused to fury the smouldering wrath of the descendant of Kusika; and it blazed forth even as the sacrificial fire glows with steady flame, when huge libations of ghee are poured into it.



CHAPTER XXI

VASISHTHA ADVISES DAŚARATHA TO SEND RĀMA

But, he kept back his rising anger as well as he might and replied to the incoherent words of love uttered by the fond father. "Thy word once gone forth, thou now seekest to go back upon it. Verily this is unworthy of thy race, glorified by such men as Raghu and contrary to the traditions of thy ancestors. Well, well, if thou thinkest that thou have acted right in this matter I will even go back as I came. *Worthy descendant of Kākutstha! reign thou in peace of heart and in happiness, having kept thy plighted faith so well.*"

At these fiery words of the terrible Viśvāmitra, winged with wrath, the solid earth shook to the foundations and the very Gods trembled in dismay. Then, Vasishtha, of mighty vows, intelligent and saintly, knowing that the whole universe stood overpowered with fear at the anger of the sage, addressed himself to Daśaratha. "Born as thou art in the line of Ikshvāku and thyself the incarnation of justice and virtue; firm in thy vows and of fortitude unspeakable; endowed with every kind of worldly happiness, thou shouldst not seek now to swerve from the Path of Right trod by thy ancestors of happy memory. Right well hast thou upheld in the world till now the glory of the line of Raghu, as the ideal Monarch, the Great Giver. Shrink not from the duty laid on thee and let not thy heart be drawn away to the Path of Unrighteousness. You have said, 'I will accomplish thy object; and if thou now seekest to prove unfaithful, thou but destroyest the hard-won merit of every righteous act of thy long life; so is it that I advise thee to send Rāma along with the sage. Endowed with the might of celestial weapons or without them, the Rākshasas are but straw before his



fiery energy, protected as he is by the strong arm of Visvāmītra, even as the ambrosia of the Gods by the blazing fire. Knowest thou the mystery that shrouds him whom it is given thee to call thy son? He is the Great Law. He is the Supreme One, the head and source of valor, wisdom and spiritual might. Mortal eyes, clouded by ignorance, cannot pierce the veil that hides his glory, nay, not the highest Gods.

“Visvāmītra here is Dharma embodied; he is the foremost of mighty warriors. None can cope with him in knowledge and wisdom; he is the highest example of Tapas and its exponent. He knows best the secret of every kind of magical weapon and none but he,—none, in all the worlds above or below, not even the Gods, the Rishis, the Asuras, Rakshasas, the Gandharvas, the Yakshas, the Kinnaras and the Uragas. When he sat of old on the throne of his forefathers and held sway over the earth, these, the mighty sons of Bhṛiṣasva, were given unto him, every one of them. These grandsons of the Prajāpati Dakṣa are countless, brilliant in their lustre, all-consuming and of unspeakable might. Dakṣa had two charming daughters, Jayā and Suprabhā, who were the mothers of countless weapons, human and divine, of unbearable effulgence. Five hundred did Jayā bring forth for the destruction of the Asura hosts, inconceivably powerful and changing forms at will; and to Suprabhā were born another five hundred, in no way behind their brothers. Visvāmītra here knows everything worth knowing about them; nay, such is his might that he can, without any effort, create new ones, if necessary. Believe me when I tell thee that his vision extends clear into the remotest future. Neither in fame nor in virtue nor in holiness has he his equal. Hence I say unto thee, entertain no doubts about sending Rāma along with him. To destroy these impious wretches is child’s play to the sage; for the glory of your son and for no other reason does he seek thee out even in thy house and pray thee to give him Rāma.”



VASISHTHA ADVISES DAŚARATHA TO SEND RÂMA.

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The old heart of Daśaratha was filled with joy and his face shone bright at the calm and convincing words of Vasishtha. Gladly he gave his consent to Viśvāmitra taking along with him, Râma, the son of his heart ; and it was to the undying glory of himself and to the welfare of the worlds.



CHAPTER XXII

RÂMA AND LAKSHMAṆA GO WITH VISVÂMITRA

Then he called unto him Râma and Lakshmaṇa, his inseparable companion ; and with his face beaming with joy, caused protective rites to be performed on behalf of the brothers, consecrated with holy mantras. Vasishtha, the High-priest, himself conducted them ; and Kausalyâ, with a mother's love, recited powerful and holy mantras over her child's head to guard him from every danger. Thereafter, the king clasped his favourite to his breast, smelt his head, gave him his choicest blessings and with a full heart and cheerful, he made him over unto Visvâmitra ; for, Vasishtha opened his eyes to the real nature of Râma and his grand mission. When the Holy One took leave of the king and started to go, and Râma of God-like presence along with him, a cool and refreshing breeze blew, free of dust. Flowers rained from the heavens ; celestial drums, conches and other martial music were heard on high ; and the gods rejoiced, in that the hour of their deliverance drew nigh.

Visvâmitra led the way. Râma followed behind, with bow on his back, his fair curls blown about his face by the gentle breeze ; and Lakshmaṇa came last, the shadow of Râma. Even as three-hooded serpents or as the Asvins reverently following in the wake of the great Grand-sire, did the brothers of matchless prowess follow the holy Visvâmitra, the beautiful peacock feathers waving over their thick coils of hair. It added, as it were, to the unbearable splendour of the sage to see the brothers Râma and Lakshmaṇa walk after him brightening the bright space around. Lovely of form and radiant in their lustre, they were a charming sight to see, these boys armed with sword and bow, with leathern gauntlets



placed on their hands; and it forcibly reminded one of the fire-born sons Skanda and Viśakha, walking behind Mahadēva, the Lord of the worlds.

They had passed not more than a mile along the southern banks of Śarayū, when Viṣvāmītra turned back and said in sweet accents, "Lose no time, Rāma, but purify yourself with water and receive from me the mantras Bala and Atibala. Hunger nor thirst, nor fatigue nor fever, nor weakness of limbs shall come upon you. The night-rangers shall not come near you, awake or asleep, careless or on your guard. None shall stand before you in the worlds above or below. In strength of arm or in valor, in fortune or in skill, in wisdom or in knowledge, in readiness of speech or quickness of reply you will not find your equal. In every respect you will be far and above any one, man or God; for, these two mantras secure to the possessor every kind of knowledge and are the source of all wisdom. Recite these on your way and you will want for nothing. Unequalled fame too shall be yours, for, these sciences are the sons of Brahma, of unspeakable glory; and search as I may, I cannot find any one more fitted to receive them than yourself. For, know I not that you are the head and fount of all knowledge, human and divine? These, the offspring of mighty tapas, and multiformed, shall confer upon you incalculable good."

So spoke Viṣvāmītra; for, who knew better than he that the boys were never before accustomed to travel on foot in the pathless woods, and put up with the chances of hunger and thirst, heat and cold, fatigue and sleeplessness?

Rāma purified himself accordingly and with a glad heart and bright face received them at the hands of the Holy One. Thereat his energy and splendor were immeasurably enhanced, even as that of the thousand-rayed Lord of the Day in a cloudless autumn sky. The princes



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rendered reverence meet to the Holy sage, their Teacher and the three spent the night on the banks of the Sarayū. And the dark hours passed away all too soon, beguiled by the pleasant discourse of the saintly ascetic, as the boy princes lay on their grass beds, all unaccustomed and strange after the princely luxury of the Royal Palace of their father.



CHAPTER XXIII

KĀMĀSṚAMA

At daybreak, Viśvāmītra came to rouse the princes lying asleep on their couch of grass.

The golden halo of radiance that crowned the face of Rāma caught his eye strongly and half to himself, he said, "What is there that I will not give to know how the thrice-fortunate Kausalyā managed to find favour in the eyes of the Lord of Glory and won the envied privilege of calling the Great Father, her dear son." Then, aloud to the object of his thoughts "Rāma, thou priceless gem that lay enshrined in the holy waters of Kausalyā's happy womb! the rosy dawn begins to creep over the slumbering Earth. Yonder Sun chases before him the fleeting Spirit of Darkness; awaken thou to *thy* glorious task and put to rout the impious Sons of Darkness.

"The shades of night roll back from the face of the globe; and with it the veil of ignorance that erstwhile hid from my eyes the mystery that circles round thee. To me it was given to set my eyes on thy sleeping glory, yet I long to see thee awakening to the light of day. Discharge thou the rites and observances that thou hast laid down for the children of the Earth: for thou art their ideal and example. Awake, for a stern taskmaster must he be to himself, who seeks to lead others along the rough ways of duty."

Thereat the royal pair sprang from their rude couch, had their bath in the holy river and went through their daily round of duties, nor forget to recite the rare mantras taught them. Then, they reverently saluted their master, the holiest of sages and, with a glad heart, prepared to follow him.

They travelled a long way and saw before them the holy Gangā of celestial origin, and further on, where it

mixes its waters with the Sarayū; and in that holy spot they came upon the dwellings of saintly ascetics of stern austerities, who pursued their life of self-denial and altruism for thousands of years. The princes were possessed with curiosity to hear from Viśvamiṭra every thing about it and turned to him with "Holy Sir! to whom does this hermitage belong? Who abides in it at present? Great is our desire to know this; and we see no one who could speak upon it with better knowledge."

Lightly laughed the sage at the seeming ignorance of Rāma and at his assumed curiosity. "With great pleasure," said he, "if you will give me your attention for a while."

"In the far past, Mahādēva chose this spot to carry on a course of austerities; he had taken Pārvaṭi to wife and was once on his way to get her down to attend upon himself during the while. At that time the Lord of Love took human shape and the Wise Ones called him Kāma. In an evil hour he took it into his head to approach the Great God and draw him away from his holy meditations, by rousing in him thoughts of love towards the Daughter of the Mountain-king; and the Maruṭs secretly urged him on. When, lo! the Lord of Ascetics opened upon him his Third Eye; 'Hum,' cried the Great One and there shot out from his eye a tongue of flame that reduced to a heap of ashes what was once Kāma, the ideal of beauty and grace in the worlds above or below. Thus did the wrath of Śiva render the God of Love bodiless; and hence his name thereafter, Ananga, the Bodiless. The spot where he met his sad fate is known as the Angadēśa.

"This is the holy hermitage of Śiva and these sages are his disciples, ever devoted to virtue; they know not sin. Rest we here for the night, between these holy rivers which we shall cross to-morrow. Now let us finish the evening rites and proceed to their holy abode."

Meanwhile, those saints of pure lives, saw through their spiritual eye the coming of the holy sage and



his princely disciples and the object of their journey, and came forward to welcome them to their forest home even while the latter were speaking about them. They offered glad rites of hospitality unto Visvâmitra, and extended a hearty welcome to Râma and Lakshmana. And in their sweet company, the quick hours glided away unperceived, so kind were they and loving and so sweet was their discourse ; till the shades of night grew on them, which perceiving, they proceeded with concentrated minds to offer their evening prayers to the Goddess of Twilight. So, in that hermitage associated with the evil-fated Kâma, did these pass the night in the company of many other ascetics whom their hosts invited there to share their pleasant time ; while Visvâmitra, of boundless wisdom and steadfast virtue, entertained the princes with pleasant narratives of old times and men and beguiled the long hours of the night.



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CHAPTER XXIV

TÂTAKÂ'S LAIR

The world awoke to a new day and the valiant princes, rising with the dawn, discharged their morning duties and followed their preceptor to the banks of the mighty river. Meanwhile, their saintly hosts had prepared a beautiful boat to take them across; and reverentially addressing themselves to Viśvāmītra, said to him, "May it please you to get into this along with your worthy disciples. We have delayed you enough; now a happy journey to you all the way and every good go with you." Viśvāmītra saluted them and took reluctant leave of the kind-hearted ones and crossed over the sacred stream, he and his pupils. When they were in the middle of the current, Râma and his brother heard a mighty sound proceeding from the confluence of swift-coursing waters and turning to their teacher, requested to know the source of the noise as of clashing ocean-waves. To which, Viśvāmītra replied all willingly :

"On the heights of the far-famed Kailâsa there exists a lake of supreme sanctity, brought into existence by an act of will of the four-faced One; and hence its name Mânasa Lake. A stream issuing from that holy spot, comes down the heights and falls into the Gangâ, passing by the capital of your father, even Ayôdhyâ; and hence its name Sarayû. The sound, so wonderful to your young ears, proceeds from the meeting of its holy waters with the rapid current of the divine Gangâ; and you will do well to offer your reverent salutations unto it."

The princes obeyed him accordingly; and crossing over to the further banks without more loss of time, soon they came upon a frightful forest, devoid of the presence of Brâhmanas; at the sight of which, Râma, curious to



know everything about it, addressed himself to Visvāmītra and said, "Lord! this wood fills me with curiosity; it resounds with the hoarse cries of terrible beasts of prey, rendered all the more fearful by the screams of wild birds and numerous flying insects. Lions, tigers, boars, and elephants, not to speak of numerous winged creatures, lend the aid of their dreadful presence to heighten the horror of the scene. Yet, this forest, so dreadful and uninviting, is pleasant to look at, beautified as it is with countless trees of graceful foliage and lovely blossoms, Dhava, Asvakarna, Kakubha, Bilva, Tinduka, Pātala and Badari and many others of unknown origin and properties."

And Visvāmītra hastened to reply, "Rāma dear, listen to me while I narrate to you a story of the far past as to whom this frightful forest belongs. Long years ago, these tracts known as Malada and Karūsa were large kingdoms teeming with countless millions, prosperous, happy and fair, even as the fancy creations of the gods. Once upon a time, it befell that Indra slew the Asura Vritra; the sin took shape and entered into him along with hunger and uncleanness, overpowering his divine form and nature. Then the gods and the sages had him purified with the waters of holy rivers, consecrated with powerful Mantras; and here it was that his foul uncleanness fell away from him. Having consigned to this place the uncleanness and the hunger that afflicted him, the hearts of the gods were glad. And Indra, overjoyed at finding himself free from his troubles, and pure once more, in a transport of gratitude, did he confer a boon on this place. "These two populous provinces have helped to receive the foulness of my body; and they shall be celebrated on earth, as Malada and Karūsa." The Devas applauded his act and his sense of reverence to the place that gave him back his pristine purity. And for long years thereafter, these places were the homes of happy millions, living in plenty, and blessed with everything that man could get from Nature.



BÂLAKÂNDĀ

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Then there came on earth a Yaksha woman, who had the strength of a thousand elephants and could take any form at will. She was the wife of Sunda; and Tātaka (for so was she named) bore him a son, Mārīcha, who equalled Indra himself in prowess. Huge of bulk and strong of arm, that Rākshasa held the people of these kingdoms in abject terror, by his matchless might and frightful countenance and form; while Tātakā amused herself with destroying the innocent inhabitants hereabouts, by hundreds and by thousands. Yonder has she taken up her abode, about half a yojana from here; and hence people steer clear of these parts as the own preserves of Tātakā. Slay her of your strong arm and rid these fair lands of a great pest; for I command you thereunto. I tell you again, that none dare to enter these regions, through which the dreadful Yakshinī ranges free and unhindered. And now you know, as well as I, how these once fair and populous lands have been laid waste, beyond all hope of recovery."



CHAPTER XXV

TĀTAKĀ

To which pregnant words of the sage of no mean might, Rāma, the flower of valor, returned sweet answer, "I have been given to understand that the Yakshas are not very formidable; how is it that one of them, and that a woman, is gifted with the wonderful strength of a thousand elephants?"

"Know then" said Viṣvāmitra "that this weak and fragile woman is endowed with abnormal strength by virtue of a boon. Long ago there was a Yaksha, Sukētu by name, a man of righteous deeds and great prowess. Unblest with any child, he had recourse to Brahma to get one; long did he pray and earnestly, until the Great Architect of the worlds was pleased with his tapas, and gave him a lovely daughter Tātakā, with the strength of a thousand elephants in her; but no son. And when she came of age to marry, he gave her a dream of beauty and grace as wife to Sunda the son of Jarjha. In good time, Mārīcha was born unto them, who later on was shorn of his great glory by being cursed to become a Rākshasa. When Sunda met his fate at the hands of Agastya, she and her son sprang upon the Holy One with terrible roars, meaning to eat him up; whereat of the mighty sage blazed forth wrath in and he cursed the pair "Wretches! Quit these fair forms and take up those of Rākshasas, terrible to behold and monstrous, and roam the earth feeding on human flesh."

Maddened with the curse, she takes revenge by laying waste, in her fury, what were once the favorite haunts of Agastya. And, Rāma! I would that in the interests of the pious and the Brāhmanas, you slay out of hand, this wicked Yakshini of cruel deeds, this fiend, who uses her



terrible strength to such evil purpose. And the more so, because, except your valiant self, no one in the worlds above or below can bring down this wretch, who glories in the might of her boon. Let no misplaced sense of pity stay your arm from wreaking this long delayed vengeance upon this cruel monster. For, you are of the line of kings and the welfare of defenceless millions demands it at your hands. A king ought to discharge his duties cruel or otherwise, sinful or meritorious, if he would protect those whose destinies lie in his hands. This is the Path of Right trod by the kings of old, whose broad backs bore the heavy responsibility of empire. Slay this unrighteous one, for, no law, human or divine, restrains her actions. Know you not that Indra slew Mānṭharā, the daughter of Virōchana, who sought to plunge the whole world in ruin? Know you not that Vishṇu mercilessly destroyed the wife of Bhrigu and mother of Sukra, who calmly set about to wipe out Indra. Instances out of count can I quote to show that kings have always deemed it their duty to rid the earth of such wicked monsters in human form. So, Rama! upon your head and eyes be it that thou cleave the heart of this woman, stealing *your* heart against tender emotions."



CHAPTER XXVI

THE FALL OF TĀTAKĀ

Then, to the soul-stirring words of his preceptor, Rāma, steadfast in his principles of conduct, gave meet reply, with joined palms the while: "My father's commands and more than that, my respect for thee, impel me to follow without hesitation or doubting the orders given by Viśvāmītra. For, have I not been enjoined to that purpose by my sire Daśaratha, in the royal presence and before the holy sages? And shall I falsify his words? Never. So, out of respect to my father and out of respect to the Holy One of boundless wisdom whom I have the happiness to call my Guru, I shall verily bring about the destruction of Tātaka and no doubt of that. Here I am, ready to carry out your orders, that aim at the welfare of cows and Brāhmaṇas and the happiness of these once prosperous lands."

So saying, he grasped his mighty bow by the middle, strung it in a moment and drew it to his ear; and the sound thereof was terrible to hear, and echoed far and near. Birds and beasts and the numerous creatures that made the dreadful forest their home, trembled in affright. Tātaka was at first confused; but, rage unbounded mastered her and she rushed towards the spot whence the sound came. Seeing her advance towards them with open mouth, huge as a mountain, and deformed, Rāma turned to Lakshmaṇa and said, "Lo! my brother! Yonder Yakshini is really no pleasant sight to behold. Timid ones will die of terror were they to look at her. But, endowed as she is with unlimited powers of illusion and be she formidable to stand against, my arrows shall compel her to retire as fast as she came, but a nose and ears less. Anyhow, I cannot bring myself to slay her,



for, her womanhood stays my arm; I shall even content myself with depriving her of her energy and power of motion."

He had not finished, when Tātaka espied him afar and rushed at him with a howl of rage. Viśvāmītra stayed her with the word "Hum" and prayed that the brothers may come out safe and victorious. She raised a huge cloud of dust that shut out the princes from view for a time; and resorting to her powers of illusion, showered rocks and stones on the pair. Then Rāma's ire was up; and scattering the rocks by a flight of arrows, he cut off her hands as she sprang at him. Yet she stayed not but roared frightfully, albeit tired and without her hands when, Lakshmana operated upon her and chopped off her ears and nose. The next moment she assumed a thousand shapes and was here, there and everywhere; then, all at once she vanished from view, leaving them bewildered by her illusion. Yet, a ceaseless downpour of rocks indicated her activity and made her terrible presence felt, at which, Viśvāmītra grew impatient and exclaimed to Rāma with some warmth, "A truce to your misplaced tenderness; are you not yet convinced that she is a she-devil who has destroyed the sacrifices of many an unoffending sage? Twilight is drawing apace and then these foul things of darkness are most powerful, nay almost invincible. See, how her energy increases as the day wane and the night draws near. Slay her outright and delay not."

Strong in her powers of illusion, she remained invisible; but Rāma's shafts sought her out even there and stayed her rocky downpour. Then, in sheer despair, did she rush at the princes with terrible roars of baffled rage; when, the boy-hero shot at her a Fiery Shaft. Fierce as a thunderbolt and almost irresistible, it struck her full on the chest; down she fell and gave up her bloody life.

At once there arose a glad shout of unspeakable relief from the anxiously watching Indra and his host of celes-



"Bravo! bravo!, well done!" cried they with one voice and lauded Rāma to the skies. They then addressed themselves to Viśvāmitra and said, "Holy One! all hail to you; you have laid every one of us, under a deep obligation. Give yet another proof of your great love to Rāma by imparting unto him the Science of the divine weapons, the sons of the Prajāpati, Bhriśāsva. Of never-failing might, brought into existence by long and terrible Tapas, you cannot find for them a fitter recipient than Rāma, so devoted is he to your service, and so necessary it is towards accomplishing a great end we have in view. So delay no more." They ended; and with loving salutations to the Holy One and hearty blessings on the boy-heroes, departed to their respective abodes.

Meanwhile, the shades of night were falling fast; and Viśvāmitra, well pleased with Rāma, smelt him lovingly on the head and said, "Rest we here for the night and reach my hermitage to-morrow." So they passed the night in the once-dreaded haunts of Tātakā, but now freed from its unhappy curse and once again a smiling and happy land, beautiful even as Chaitraratha. Rāma, having thus rid the earth of the terrible daughter of a Yaksha, gods and sages vied with one another in singing his praises; a deep sleep and sweet descended upon the tired eyes of Rāma and he lay locked in the soft arms of slumber, till he was roused at early dawn by the holy sage.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE GIFT OF VIŚVĀMITRA

Next morning, Viśvāmitra, of mighty renown, turned to the young hero with a pleasant smile and addressed him in accents sweet and mild, "Well pleased am I with you; and out of the joy that fills my heart, shall I impart unto you the mysteries connected with warlike weapons of every kind; master of which, neither Gods nor Asuras, Gandharvas nor Urugas, can stand against you in battle and not come under your influence and be worsted. Such mighty weapons shall I give you, divine in their essence.

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Dandachakra | 30. Nandana, the favorite |
| 2. Dharmachakra | Astra of the Vidyā- |
| 3. Kālachakra | dharas (sword-like in |
| 4. Vishnuchakra | shape) |
| 5. Aindrāstra | 31. Mānava } (the favorite |
| 6. Vajrāstra | 32. Prasvāpana } Astras of the |
| 7. Sivā's Trident | 33. Prasamana } Gandharvas). |
| 8. Brahmasiras | |
| 9. Aishikāstra | 34. Sūryāstra |
| 10. Brahmāstra | 35. Darpana |
| 11. The clubs, Mōdakī and | 36. Sōshana } favorites of |
| Sikhari | 37. Santāpana } the God of |
| 12. Dharmapāsa | 38. Vilāpana } Love. |
| 13. Kālapāsa | 39. Madana |
| 14. Varunapāsa | 40. Mohanāstra (used by the |
| 15. Varunāstra | Pisāchas) |
| 16. Two thunderbolts, the | 41. Tamasāstra |
| moist and the dry. | 42. Saumanāstra |
| 17. Pinākāstra | 43. Samvarta |
| 18. Nārāyanāstra | 44. Mausalāstra |
| 19. Agnēyāstra (named | 45. Satyāstra |
| Sikhara) | |



20. Vayavyāstra (named 46. Māyādhara
Prāthana) 47. Tōjas Prabhā
21. Hayasiras 48. Sisirāstra (used by the God
Sōma)
22. Kraunchāstra 49. Sudāmana
23. Vishnusaṅkṣi 50. Śītēṣhu (the weapon of
Bhaga)
24. Rudrasaṅkṣi 51. Mānavāstra
25. Kankāla } used by
26. Musala } the
27. Ghōra } Asuras
28. Kāpāla }
29. Kankāṇa }

All these and many more do thou receive from me. They are of no ordinary might; they can take any form at will and can be depended upon in any emergency."

Then Viśvāmitra duly purified himself and taking his seat facing the East, initiated Rāma into the mysteries of those magical weapons; and well pleased was he thereat. So mighty were they that the very Gods could not receive and retain them in their entirety.

As the sage uttered the words of power, they assumed visible form and stood about Rāma. With joined palms they addressed their new master and said, "Here we are, Lord Rāma, thy servants to command. Ever gracious unto thee, we stand ready to anticipate thy least wishes."

Rāma accepted their service and touching each one of them in token of mastership, replied to them with a pleased heart, "Come unto me when I think of you." He next turned to his Guru and offered him reverent salutations; after which they resumed their journey.



CHAPTER XXVIII

THE MYSTERY OF THE WITHDRAWAL

They walked for a while in silence, when Rāma turned to Viśvāmītra and said with a bow, "You have been pleased to initiate me into the mysteries of these magical weapons and have rendered me almost invulnerable to Gods and Asuras. But, may I request to know how these are withdrawn?"

And all too glad, did the sage of mighty vows and terrible energy instruct him therein.

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| “1. Satyavān | 23. Vimala |
| 2. Satyakīrti | 24. Yogandhara |
| 3. Dhrishṭha | 25. Haridra (to destroy the |
| 4. Rabhasa | Daityas). |
| 5. Pratiḥaratara | 26. Sārchirmālī |
| 6. Parāṅgmukha | 27. Dhrītirmālī |
| 7. Avāṅgmukha | 28. Vṛittimān |
| 8. Lakshāksha | 29. Ruchira |
| 9. Vishama | 30. Pitrīsaumanasa |
| 10. Prīdhanābha | 31. Vidhūta |
| 11. Sunābhaka | 32. Makara |
| 12. Daśāksha | 33. Karavīrakara |
| 13. Satavaktra | 34. Dhana |
| 14. Daśaśirsha | 35. Dhānya |
| 15. Satodara | 36. Kāmarūpa |
| 16. Padmanābha | 37. Kāmaruchi |
| 17. Mahānābha | 38. Moha |
| 18. Dundunābha | 39. Āvarāṇa |
| 19. Sunābhaka | 40. Jṛimbhaka |
| 20. Jyotiṣha | 41. Sarvanābha |
| 21. Kṛiṣāna | 42. Santāna |
| 22. Nairāśya | 43. Varāṇa |

Receive from me these sons of Bhṛiṣāsṅwa, capable of taking any shapes at will and of unbearable splendor. For, no better recipient do I see than thee.”



As my Lord willeth " replied Râma with a glad heart and did so. With joined palms they ranged themselves around Râma in human shapes of exceeding effulgence, and there was nothing that he could not command whom they owned as their master. Some were like glowing coals, some like smoke and others radiant like the sun and the moon. All of them reverently saluted their new master and said, " Here are we, thou flower of valor ! awaiting thy orders." " Dwell ye in my memory " replied Râma, " and assist me when the time comes. I give you leave to go." " We obey " replied they and taking respectful leave of him, vanished from view. With the permission of his Guru, he instructed Lakshmana in the mysteries of the magical weapons and their withdrawal.

They then resumed their journey until they came to a beautiful grove of trees, at the sight of which, Râma turned to his master and said in charming accents, " What may be that tall grove yonder, hard by that mountain before us ? It looks more like a bank of clouds piled up, so lofty it is and so dark. A pleasant sight to see the happy birds and beasts sporting there fearlessly with joyful cries. The lovely aspect of the country hereabouts impels me to think that we are well out of the dark and dreary forest of the she-demon, Tatakâ. Who is it that resides in that charming locality ? Verily, great is my desire to know everything about it. Are we come to where range those wicked wretches of fierce deeds, who revel in slaying Brâhmanas and destroying the sacrifices of innocent sages ? Where do you conduct your sacrifice ? Where should I take my stand to destroy the Rakshasas and protect your rite ? Prithee satisfy my unbounded curiosity on this head—you from whom time and space have no secrets ! "



CHAPTER XXIX

VĀMANA AND BALI

And to him who desired to acquaint himself with the story of that grove, as if he were no wiser than any one of us, replied Visvāmītra of boundless spiritual might, "Here it was that Vishṇu, the Lord of the Universe abode invisible for ages untold, engaged in long and difficult Tapas, for the good of the worlds; and as Vāmana, He sanctified it with His Divine Presence. Siddhāsrama is it called; for, even here the Blessed One accomplished the object of His Tapas.

"It was about that time, Balī, the son of Virōchana, routed the celestial hosts and held undisputed sway over the three worlds. He commenced a grand sacrificial rite, when, Agni and the other Gods came to Vishṇu here and said, "Bali, the son of Virōchana, is even now performing a grand sacrifice; and before it is over, you should see that we accomplished our object. He makes it a point to refuse nothing to any one who may ask him for it, it matters not who or what. For our sake call in thy inscrutable Power of Illusion to thy aid; assume the form of a dwarf, seek the sovereignty of the three worlds at his hands as a gift, and bring peace and happiness to the tortured hearts of us all."

It chanced that about the same time, Kāśyapa, the Patriarch, and his wife Adīti carried on a long and severe course of austerities and won the grace of the Lord. Even as the noon-day sun or like the blazing fire shone he in his spiritual glory. Vishṇu came down to where he was and spoke to him in sweet and kindly accents, "Son, mightily pleased am I with your Tapas. Ask of me what thou wilt and it is yours."

With noble hymns did Kāśyapa praise the Giver of all good, "Supreme One! My long and difficult vow has



indeed borne fruit in that I have been blessed with a sight of Thy Blessed Presence. Thou art Tapas in Thy essence ; Thou art the embodiment of Tapas ; Thou art the sum total of all Tapas ; and Thou art the innermost soul of every kind of Tapas. The whole universe do I see in Thy resplendent form. Thou hast no beginning and Thy nature is beyond the ken of any, man or god. Lord ! I take my refuge in Thee and Thy boundless mercy."

And to him replied the Lord, "Again do I say unto you that you have won my grace. You are pure as Purity itself and I can refuse you nothing."

Then the son of Marichi submitted unto him a prayer in all humility, "Great One ! grant Thou this boon unto Aditi and unto the gods who pray it of Thee. Deign Thou to be born as our son and let the world know Thee as the younger brother of Indra, whom Thou hast placed over the gods. Render Thou a signal service thereby to the distressed Dēvas. And this holy spot shall, through Thy grace, deserve the name of Siddhāsrama, for, Thou goest forth from this spot when Thy object has been accomplished."

"Be it so," rejoined the Lord and was born of Aditi as Vāmana. Intent upon the good of the worlds, did He approach Bali as a dwarf and say, "Great Giver ! grant me this, *prayer of mine, three short feet of earth ;*" and He got it. Thrice did He put forth His mighty foot and the three worlds were covered with it. Bali was shorn of his overwhelming pride and might and Vāmana gave back the sovereignty of the worlds to Indra.

This hermitage is ever associated with the presence of the Lord and ever my heart turns to it with unbounded devotion to Him. Here do the Rakshasas resort, the untiring enemies of the peaceful sages and their sacrifices ; and here it is you should lay them low, the evil ones. This day shall we reach it, the holy Siddhāsrama and it is yours as much as it is mine."

Very soon they were within its sacred precincts and then it was that Visvâmitra shone in all his glory, even as the cloudless moon resplendent in the constellation of Purnarvasu. There he was welcomed by the numerous ascetics of saintly life that made Siddhâsrama their home; right reverently did they accord unto him due worship and no less hearty was the welcome they extended to the princely pair. The brothers rested themselves for a while and approaching their master, said, "Lord! if thou so wilt, thou mayest take upon thyself the sacrificial vow even to-day. Rightly has this place been named Siddhâsrama, for, thy object shall, of a truth, be realized here." "May your words prove true," replied Visvâmitra; and with restrained senses and concentrated mind, did he take upon himself the initiatory vows. In that peaceful hermitage the princes passed the night in the sweet company of the holy sages. At the dawn of day they were up and offering their prayers to the Goddess of Twilight. Their religious observances for the morning over and the mystical recitations of the Mantras, they touched the feet of their Teacher, who, having finished the offerings unto the Fire-god, was seated in calm repose.



CHAPTER XXX

VISVÂMITRA'S SACRIFICE

The valiant princes were no mean judges of time and place: they knew when to speak and where; and in words respectful and apt, did they address Visvâmitra: "Lord! kindly acquaint us with the precise time when we should be on our guard against the wicked Rākshasas; for, we do not wish to be taken unawares and be late."

The assembled sages there were loud in their praises of the heroic brothers and the martial ardour that characterised their words and actions. "Six days and nights from this, do ye keep strict watch against the cruel ones. The Holy One has taken the sacrificial vow and will observe silence." And for six days and nights did the youths of boundless energy keep watch and ward over the hermitage. They put their heroic souls into the arduous task and were wholly absorbed in it; and Visvâmitra, safe under their protection, went on with his sacrificial rite uninterrupted.

On the sixth day, Rāma turned to his brother and said "Lakshmana, be on the alert and keep a sharp look out." And even as he spake and prepared himself for action, did the sacrificial altar begin to glow all on a sudden. Lovely flowers were scattered over it and the utensils of sacrifice—spoons, ladles, pots, pans, fuel-sticks and the sacred grass. Visvâmitra was conducting the rite, grim and silent, while the Adhvaryus and the priests assisted him therein. And to the deep intonation of the holy Mantras to drive away the black demons, did the sacrifice proceed according to the rules laid down for it. All at once the fire leaped up; and close upon it was heard a frightful roar proceeding from the sky. The dreadful Rākshasas were upon them, shrouded in thick murky



clouds that darkened the earth, even as during the heavy rains—the effects of their powers of illusion. Mārīcha and Subāhu and their followers ranged themselves in the sky and kept up a continual shower of blood on the fire-altar. The fire blazed up again, higher than before, as if in angry protest against this foul desecration ; and answering fires flashed forth from the eyes of Rāma as if reflecting the blood-stained altar. He rushed to the spot and looking upwards, saw the foul demons ranged aloft in terrible array, darkening the darkened sky. All at once did the two foremost, Mārīcha and Subāhu, swoop down upon him, even as unclean birds of prey ; when, Rāma turned to his brother and said “ Lakshmana, lo ! there they come, the wicked wretches, the destroyers of numberless holy rites. Unsightly cannibals these, the dread foes of the celestials, yet tough and unassailable even as thunderbolts. I cannot somehow bring myself to slay such like chaff, small game for me ; yet shall I drive them away, even as fleet-footed clouds before a gale.”

With that, he sent forth a Mānavāstra, flaming and terrible in its energy and it that struck Mārīcha full on the chest. Back he flew with resistless speed, hundred yōjanas and more, until he fell senseless and tottering into the depths of the tossing ocean.

Amused at the sight, Rāma turned to Lakshmana “ Wonderful indeed is the Cold Arrow, the mighty Mānavāstra and just in its punishment. See, it has struck him senseless, but keeps yet the spark of life in him, as if it divined my secret resolve to spare him against a future occasion, when I have use for him. And as for these, his friends and followers, I shall even destroy the wretched crew, merciless, of foul lives, delighting in deep draughts of human blood, the foes to every holy rite and sacrifice.”

So saying, and as if to display his quickness of hand, he let fly an Agnēyāstra at Subāhu, which struck him square on his heart and hurled him down, a shapeless corpse. And ere the eye had time to wink, he let fly a



Vayavyastra that despatched the rest to "where the wicked cease from troubling," to the immense delight of the sages, who were anxiously watching this strange fight, between a delicate slip of a boy and the fierce-visaged Rakshasas of vast bulk and might. They could scarcely bring themselves to believe what they saw—it was over so soon ; but, when they realized the wonderful truth, they broke forth in unstinted applause and hearty blessings and eyed Râma with strange awe and reverence, even as the Gods regarded Indra when he came back victor from his terrible battle with the Asuras.

The sacrifice neared its happy end ; the earth and the sky were clear and happy once again, when Visvâmitra turned to Râma and said, " Now my heart knows peace, in that my object has been accomplished. Well hast thou discharged the bidding that thy Guru laid on thee. And rightly has this hermitage been named Siddhâsrama ; you have but confirmed the fact and conferred greater glory on it."

Thanking thus the boy-hero in words sweet and noble, the sage proceeded to his evening prayers, accompanied by the gratified princes.



CHAPTER XXXI

THE TRIP TO METHELÂ

There they stayed for the night, the heroic youths and it was a happy night to them ; in that they had succeeded in their mission. Next morning they were up at day-break and having finished their daily observances, went over to where Viṣvâmiṭra and the other ascetics sat. Reverently they saluted their Guru, who blazed forth in his splendour even as the smokeless flame and said to him in sweet accents and noble "Here we are, thy servants to command ; what are our orders for the day ? Nay, far be it from your noble heart the thought that you are working us too much, royal youths delicately nurtured and daintily brought up. There was a king whom gaunt Famine drove to sell his only son to a low-born hind ; would the boor work the boy less for being a prince ? We are yours, body and soul ; for, our sire has made us over to you ; and here is our place at your feet, until you have no more use for us." *Even so does the Lord seek out His children and render them sweet service and lowly.*

Viṣvâmiṭra replied for the other sages and said, "Janaka, the righteous ruler of Mithilâ, is even now celebrating a grand sacrifice ; and if it is not inconveniencing you greatly, we very much like you to come with us. Besides, there is for you a sight to see—a gem of a bow, wonderful, of inconceivable strength, blazing in its energy. It was given by the Gods to a former ruler of the land during a great sacrifice. Neither the Gods nor the Gandharvas, nor the Asuras nor the Rākshasas, can so much as string it ; why speak of puny mortals ? Nay, not that there were wanting countless princes of mighty arm who essayed that impossible feat desiring to gauge the power of the weapon. So, there are two things to attract you



in their—the holy sacrifice and the wonderful bow. It was, as I told you, got by a king of old, as the reward of a great sacrifice he performed in honor of the Gods ; who, pleased therewith, gave him the excellent weapon. It forms the chief object of adoration in Janaka's palace and he offers reverent worship to it every day with bright flowers and sweet perfumes and incense."

He ended and prepared to set out along with the expectant princes and the holy ascetics. Taking affectionate leave of the Wood-Gods that had sheltered him so long in their midst he said, "May all good be yours. Long have I sojourned under your kind shades and to-day I take reluctant leave of you, the object of my stay among you joyfully accomplished. I go forth hence to the Himalayan heights, over across the Gangâ." Reverently he went round the hospitable abode and set his face towards the north.

And him followed a hundred conveyances of Brah-mavâdins ; and wonderful to behold ! the birds and the beasts that dwelt about the holy hermitage went after the mighty sage of righteous vows, until he pressed them to return.

They travelled a long distance, until the sun hung low in the heavens, when the company encamped on the banks of Soṇâ. They took their evening bath in the sacred stream and having made offerings unto the Fire-God, sat down before Viśvâmitra ; the princes approached the group and with low reverence to the elders, took their seats in front of their Guru. Râma it was, that started the conversation by a question to Viśvâmitra. "May I pray you to satisfy my great curiosity about this region where we are ? Thickly wooded and well-watered, to whom does it belong ?" And the sage, who loved nothing more than to converse upon things good and holy, spoke as follows, induced thereto by Râma, while the sages of stern austerities drank in the tale with eager ears.



CHAPTER XXXII

KUSANĀBHA

There was once a righteous king, Kusa by name, one of the mind-born sons of Brahma—the wisest and the most valiant. Unlike Nārada and the Kumāras he chose the Path of Action; and leaving his bright home on high, he took upon himself the onerous duties of a Ruler of men; hence his name Kusa. Ever respectful unto the good, he was ever intent upon the discharge of the duties of his high office and acquired immense spiritual merit by his hard austerities.

He took unto wife a princess of Vidarbha, who was, in every way, a meet wife for such a holy king; and she bore unto him four sons, all like unto their sire in character and might—Kusāmba, Kusanābha, Adhūtarajas, and Vasu. The old king was extremely pleased with his worthy sons of truthful speech, righteous lives, bright presence and boundless energy; and following the traditions of the kings of old, he spoke to them, “Reign ye over the earth and acquire inestimable merit thereby.”

And, in obedience to their father's commands, did the four princes found four excellent capitals—Kausāmbi, Mahodaya, Dharmāranya and Girivraja, respectively. These are the dominions of Vasu, the last of the brothers. See you yon hills, five in number, that guard the country like giant sentinels? And there is the lovely stream, Sona, of great sanctity, that runs like a silver garland among the hills and waters the land of Magadha ruled by Vasu. It is a lovely spot, fertile, well-watered and healthy, the site of ancient kingdoms now no more.

Kusanābha, the royal sage, had by the Apsaras, Gbhritācī, a hundred graceful daughters. One day, these girls, young and lovely, took it into their heads to enjoy a walk in the royal gardens about the city. They were a



charming sight to see, these young and lovely maidens in their gems and gemmed robes, even as clear pools of crystal waters in the rains. They had a happy time of it among the arbours and bowers, dancing and singing and leaping and frisking.

And it so chanced that Vāyu, the Lord of Air, beheld them in the gardens, in all their ravishing loveliness, in the pride of their youth and charms. Like bright stars between murky clouds shone they; and Vāyu was stirred even unto the utmost depths of his fickle heart. "My heart goes out unto you, every one, ye lovely ones! Be mine and crown my days with sweet happiness. Cast off aside that mortal nature of yours and enjoy immortal life in my company. A pitiable sight that youth of mortals even as a streak of lightning in a dark sky; a blinding flash and lo! it is gone. But I shall endow you with the deathless youth and beauty of the Immortals themselves."

Long laughed they and loud at these presumptuous words of the Wind-God, whose might none can resist and live. "Thou courtest ever in the bodies of beings, high and low; and no one is unacquainted with what you are and what you can do. Verily it becomes you not to insult us thus with your proposal. Know you not that we are the daughters of Kusanābha and that it is but child's play to us to hurl yon Indra from his seat of power? But we waste not our energy on trifles. May that time never come about, when, out of a perverted heart, we will presume to insult our parent of truthful speech and ourselves choose our husbands. Our sire is our master and our God; and *they* are our lords whom *he* gives us to."

Enraged at the bold and defiant words of the girls, Vāyu's heart was shaken with wrath; and putting forth his might, did he distort their graceful limbs out of all recognition.

In great grief and shame, they rushed into their father's presence and fell at his feet with sobs and tears. The sight of his dear daughters, once so lovely and happy, but



How so crooked and deformed, and out of their wits with shame and grief, stirred his placid nature to its very depths, and he exclaimed "What is this, my dears! Who has dared to insult the Great Law of Right thus flagrantly? Who has made you crooked and distorted? What! all silent! and weeping!"

In fierce rage he hissed forth his questions, like a hooded snake about to strike; but, mastering himself with a mighty effort, he sent forth his clear spiritual eye before which nothing was hidden.



BRAHMADATTA

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

Brahmadatta.

Thereupon the hundred daughters of Kusanabha laid their heads at his feet and spake "Vayu, Pervader of all, would even compel us to his wishes ; and forgetful of all sense of right and duty, had he recourse to evil ways. ' We are under our reverend sire ' we pleaded ' and are not our own masters. Ask thou our sire, if he would give us to thee as wives.' He would not listen to us ; but with a heart bent on evil, made us what you see, even while we were earnestly pleading with him."

Then the King, a rare model of patience and virtue, replied to his afflicted daughters in accents mild and grave. " Well have you done and gloriously. Forgiveness should characterise the life of every one laying any claims to self-restraint and serenity ; and you have borne patiently a deadly insult. I cannot enough praise your harmony of spirit and action, in that you have all acted alike and kept before your eyes the traditions of our race ; for, forgiveness is the brightest jewel in the crown of a woman ; nay, for the matter of that, man as well. Hard task for a girl to brave a man's wiles and seductions : harder to have a giant's strength and not use it like a giant, in the face of deadly insult ; harder still not to burn one's wings at the baleful fires of celestial beauty ; harder still to keep back our thunderbolts when we have the right to launch them against the mighty gods and the chance ; and lo ! hardest of all, wonder of wonders ! ! the wayward hearts of a hundred maidens, (whose name is frailty) beating all one stroke and acting in perfect unison. Endowed with Forgiveness, a man need not go seek for any other virtue—Charity, Truth, Sacrifice, Fame, or Righteousness ; for, Forgiveness rules the world and holds it up."



Mightier than the very Gods, yet he sent them away, and consulted with his wise ministers as to the marriage of his daughters, the time, the place, and the parties.

It was about that time, a great sage, Chuli by name, practised the Brahma Tapas, with pure life and chaste vows; and all along, a Gandharva, Somada by name, the daughter of Urmila, attended upon him devotedly, with restrained senses and righteous heart. Gratified with her service, the Holy One saw into the record of Time and spoke, "Fair Lady! well hast thou served me and won my favour. Is there anything I can do for thee?"

She marked that he was in a mood to give; and in sweet words and apt, did she pray the Blessed One, who was no mean speaker himself. "Lord! I make no difference between thee and the supreme Brahman, so great thy Tapas and so mighty the Brahmic splendour that crowns thee. I would even have a son, endowed with Brahma Tapas. No husband do I take, nor does any claim me as his wife. Give me a son, in that I approach thee according to the Brahma mode of marriage."

Pleased with her purity of heart and nobility of purpose, Chuli gave her a mind-born son, named Brahmadata. Kampilya made he his capital and held sway there as splendidly as Indra over his heavenly realm.

And Kusanabha made up his mind to bestow his hundred daughters on Brahmadata. Respectfully did he invite him to his city and pray him to accept his girls in marriage. And lo! the moment Brahmadata took them by the hand, their deformity and grief dropped away from them like a dark cloak and they shone, if possible, with greater loveliness and grace than ever; whereat the father's heart knew no bounds to its joy to see them freed from the evil spell cast upon them by Vayu. Later on, he sent them



away with their husband to his capital, with splendour becoming their rank and his sense of joy.

Somada, the fond-mother, rejoiced most at the glorious choice her son did make. She could not fondle her daughters-in-law enough nor praise their noble father.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Visvamitra's Ancestry.

His daughters gone away from him, the childless father set about to perform a rite to get a son to continue his line on Earth. When he was busy about it, Kusa, his father and the mind-born son of Brahma, came down unto him and said, "Son! verily you shall be blessed with a boy, a righteous one after your own heart. Gadhi, you shall call him; and he shall hold up your name to unparalleled renown in the worlds for all time time to come." He spoke and went back to the high world of Brahma, even as he came.

And in good time did Kusanabha see a son born unto him and Gadhi was his name—a marvel of virtue and holiness. Him am I proud to call my sire, Gadhi the saint; I am a Kausika and a decendant of the godlike Kusa. I have a sister too, Satyavati, born before me, who is given in marriage to Richika; ever devoted to her husband, she followed him to Swarga in her mortal body. But soon she came down on Earth, as the holy stream Kausiki; heavenly in her origin, charming and crystal-like in her purity, my sister has devoted herself to the good of humanity. And out of the great love I bear to my dear one, do I like to abide at her side, on the slopes of the Himalaya, whence she flows. Ever steadfast in truth and righteous, my sister Satyavati,



the paragon of wives, stays in her mountain home ; while in pursuance of the vow I have bound myself by, have come down here, even to Siddhasrama, far far from my beloved sister ; and deep is the debt of obligation I am under to your godlike valor, in that you have enabled me to accomplish my desires.

Well, it is now past midnight; and I have been keeping you all from sweet sleep, by my accounts of my own ancestry and of the country where we are now, as you desired to know of me. And now, seek ye the arms of repose ; else will our journey to-morrow be delayed. Not a breath of air stirs the leaf of yon trees ; beasts and birds have sought, ere long, their silent abodes ; and Night has spread her black pall over the earth and every part thereof. The shades of twilight are gradually fading away ; and dark Night keeps watch over the sleeping earth and flashes forth bright glances from many a starry eye and constellation. And yonder comes the Queen of Night, the silvery Moon, chasing the darkness from off the Earth with her cool and clear rays and infusing joy and gladness into the hearts of all beings. Behold the Rangers of the night, beings that love the shades of darkness, hosts of Yakshas, Rakshasas, and terrible monsters that batten on human flesh."

He ended ; the auditors shook of the spell that lay deep upon them and with one voice cried, "Well, hast thou spoken, Holy One" and rendered him thanks meet and unstinted praise. "Noble is the race of the Kausikas and ever intent upon Right and Virtue ; and the kings that adorn that line, mighty souls, even as the Great Father Himself. And not the least, your Holy Self, that has acquired everlasting renown ; nor is your sister Kausiki a whit behind these, the best of streams and the bright gem in the crown royal race of Kusa."



And to the sound of their sweet praise, did Visvamitra sink into the lap of sleep, even as the resplendent Orb of Day retires to rest behind the Evening Hill. The Royal brothers were no less warm in their heart-felt praises of their master and with minds filled with awe and wonder, sought their rude couches and courted calm repose.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Ganga and Uma.

Visvamitra and the sages with him rested there for the night on the banks of Sona. At day-break, he roused the sleeping princes and said "The day dawns and the morning twilight comes on apace. Quit thy slumbers, dear Rama, and prepare to start."

They went through the morning prayers and were about to set out, when Rama addressed himself to the sage and said "Master, this Sona runs shallow, her clear crystal water dotted with small sandy hillocks. Which way shall we cross it?"

To which the sage replied, "Our friends even now are taking the route I advised them to." They crossed to the further bank and proceeded on their journey, feasting their eyes on the beautiful scenery of hill and dale, forest and stream, mountain and valley. At noon, they broke their journey (for they had covered a long way since morning) on the banks of the sacred Ganga, the delightful resort of saintly ascetics. The sight filled the brothers and the sages with supreme joy, the broad waters forming the home of many a swan and other gay aquatic bird sporting fearlessly. There they pitched their quarters and having bathed in the holy river, they offered libations



of water to the manes of the departed. Then devout worship to the sacred Fire and a hearty meal of the sweet food offered thereunto. Once again they met and sat round Visvamitra, of wondrous wisdom, when, Rama took upon himself to draw out the sage and started the conversation.

"Master mine, great is my desire to know how the Ganga, abiding in the high heavens, came down to the dark Earth and flowing through the three worlds entered the Lord of Waters."

Questioned thus, Visvamitra proceeded to recount the origin and the history of Ganga. "Himavan—the monarch of mountains and the storehouse of everything rich and valuable—had by his wife Manorama, the graceful daughter of Meru, two daughters of charming beauty. Ganga was the elder and Uma the younger. The Devas prayed Himavan to grant them the presence of Ganga to accomplish certain ends of theirs. With a philanthropic heart did he allow them to take her away, the holy river whose water purifies everything it touches. Glad beyond all description at the ready affability of the father, the Devas invited her to their world, ever intent upon doing good to all beings. But Uma the younger, steadfast in virtue and purity, entered upon a long and difficult course of Tapas; at the end of which, her parent gave her as wife to Rudra, a meet bride-groom for the world-honored maiden of mighty spiritual energy. And now, Rama, have I related unto you, as well as I can, the origin of Ganga and Uma, the daughters of Himavan and the honored objects of the World's worship; as also how Ganga of Three Courses went to the region of the Shining Ones. The holy stream before you is none other than she, who from her mountain home in the Himalaya, carried her sin-cleansing waters to the high heavens of the Immortals.



CHAPTER XXXVI.

Uma's Curse.

The brothers listened to the recital with pleasure and respect and when the Master had ended, Rama questioned him again. "Wonderful indeed is what you have related and holy ; and now deign to enlighten us on the history of the elder daughter of the Monarch of Mountains. Tell us in detail, for thou knowest best, her birth in Heaven and Earth. How did she come to take three different courses and purify the three worlds ? Narrate her adventures therein and how she came to bear her name Tripathaga."

Thus addressed, the sage of immeasurable spiritual lustre, descanted at length on the wonderful narrative to the assembled ascetics. "Of yore, Mahadeva, the Black-throated, of boundless energy, took Uma unto wife; and overpowered with desire, began to disport himself with her. Hundreds of years passed away and Mahadeva knew it not. But there was no issue born of them ; whereat, Brahma and the Devas began to tremble for the consequences. If a son should chance to be born unto these, who could bear him ? So they approached the Divine One and prayed unto him in trembling accents, " Supreme Lord ! Thou art ever intent upon the welfare of the worlds. Turn a merciful ear to the prayers of Thy children, the Angels of Light. The worlds are unable to bear the fiery energy of Thine. Engage Thyself with the Great Mother in Brahma Tapas. Have pity on the worlds ; restrain Thy energy in Thy own body. Protect Thou all beings ; it behoves Thee not to annihilate them."

" Be it so" replied Mahadeva. "I and Uma shall retain our respective energies within our own bodies. Let the worlds rest in peace and your hearts too. But, my energy



moved out of its receptacle and must break out ; who then have you among yourselves to receive it?"

"The earth, O Lord, will take unto her Thy energy that might happen to escape Thee."

Then Mahadeva let out his energy on the earth and enveloped her entirely with her mountains and forests. Thereafter, the Gods spoke to Agni "Enter thou the energy of Siva, terrible to approach and let Vayu assist thee therein."

Permeated by Agni, it was transformed into a white mountain and in course of time, a clump of holy reeds sprang thereupon, brilliant as the Sun or the Fire. And from it was born Kartikeya, of great energy, the son of Agni.

Threat Gods and sages praised high Siva and Uma, their hearts filled with joy at the great danger being averted. But Uma, the daughter of the mountain-king, spoke bitter words and sharp to the assembled Gods. "Reap ye the fruit of your crooked ways. Ye have caused me grief and disappointment ; and for your pains take this my curse upon you." Forthwith she took up water and, her whole frame glowing with rage and her eyes red with the fire of wrath, launched a terrible doom at the trembling Gods. "Ye that have dared to interfere with my pleasures, ye that have dared to come between me and the dearest object of my desires—son to gladden my heart, ye shall never have sons born unto ye of your own wives. From this moment, your wives shall be childless."

Next she returned to the affrighted Earth and her anger shot out against her. "Vile creature, many shall be thy forms and many thy lords. Evil-minded One, thou envied me a son and succeeded in depriving me of one ; but my wrath has power to deny thy heart any comfort arising from a child born unto thy loins."



Rudra glanced an eye of pity at the Devas, who, like guilty things, hung down their heads in shame; and proceeding to the North-west, engaged himself, in stern Tapas in the dark woods that clothe the charming slopes of the Himalaya.

Thus have you heard from me, the narrative of Uma the daughter of the mountain. Now shall I relate unto you, the origin of Ganga, the elder sister."

CHAPTER 37.

The Birth of Kartikeya.

Meanwhile, the Devas wanted a general to lead them against the Asuras and they approached the Grand-Sire and prayed unto him for one. "Lord, he whom you gave unto us to lead our armies, is ever engaged in Tapas along with his consort Uma. Advise us what to do next. Do we not look unto you for help, guidance and support? The welfare of the worlds is dearer unto you; do you point out the course of action best for us."

The four-faced One calmed the fears of the Shining Ones and spoke to them encouragingly. "The words of the Great Mother shall prove true and you shall not have children born unto you of your own wives; never shall it be otherwise. Now, Agni shall bring forth a son of Ganga, who is even now purifying your worlds. He shall be the General of the Gods and the terror of his foes. Uma, her sister, shall take the child unto her heart and he shall be to her even as the child of her womb.

These words rejoiced the hearts of the Gods; they took reverent leave of their Leader and went back even as



they came. Proceeding to the Kailasa, rich in metals, gold and gems; they directed Agni to bring forth a son to accomplish their ends. "Oh, thou! the Leader of the Gods and the Light of the world! help us in our need and bring us good. Of great splendour thou, direct thy energy towards Ganga, the daughter of the Monarch of mountains."

"It shall be even as you desire" replied the Lord of the Fire and approaching Ganga, said to her, "The gods desire that thou bear in thy womb my unfailing energy and bring forth a son to serve their purpose." "With great pleasure" replied she and assumed a divine form, whereat he marvelled greatly; and discharging his fiery energy on all sides, he permeated her in all her limbs with his fierce might. And Ganga was penetrated through and through, even unto the utmost ends of her body. But it was too much even for her, the all purifying One; and she cried out unto the Priest of the Gods in utter helplessness. "Lord, I feel powerless to bear within me thy terrible energy that is even now consuming me." Even as she spoke, the flames grew and grew until the agony became too intense for her.

Thereupon, Agni, out of the great pity that wrung his heart, said unto her, "If so, Ganga, let out that which is in thy womb at the foot of Himavan; may be it will relieve thee of your pain and misery." The holy river gladly hastened to obey him and the refulgent Embryo was directed through the various streams that had their origin in her. And what came forth from her womb was of the hue of the molten gold and was known in the world from that day as Gold, pure and shining. From the pungent element thereof were produced copper and black iron, while the impure parts of it were converted into brass and lead. Thus were the diverse metals brought forth into existence and grew apace. The mighty mountain turned of the colour of gold and the forests around it were filled with the unbearably



Bright energy of that which proceeded from Ganga's womb. Thenceforth that gold was known among men by the name Jatarupa, radiant even as fire. The trees, the grass, the creepers and everything therein was converted into gold, Kanchana, so called.

Indra and the other gods arranged that the Kritikas should nurse the boy. They took him as their child and upon a promise thereunto from the Devas, suckled him. "This boy," said they, "nourished by you from the milk of your breasts, shall take your name and the world shall know him as Kartikeya. Unparalleled shall be his renown in the worlds." The Kritikas washed him free and pure of the fetal impurities that adhered to his body, when he dropped from the womb of Ganga at the foot of the Himalaya. "Skanda he shall be called" exclaimed the Devas, "as he was dropped from the womb;" and Kartikeya was known by that name also.

The Divine boy shone in his supreme radiance even as the smokeless flame. Milk streamed forth from the breasts of the Kritikas and wonderful to behold! the child put forth six heads and six mouths to draw his sustenance from his six foster mothers. In the short space of a day, he grew unto his full height and strength. Of matchless grace and beauty, it was but child's play to him to put to rout the assembled hosts of the Daityas. The Celestial hosts gathered round him with peans of joy and with common consent crowned him as their Lord and Leader and installed him in his proud post.

Thus have I narrated unto you, Rama, the wonderful episode of Ganga and the birth of Kartikeya from her. supremely holy is this and he whose heart is drawn in devotion and reverence, towards the Divine Child, his days shall never grow less on earth; and blessed with sons and grand-



sons without end, he shall, when he quits that body, be taken unto the highest heavens, even where Kartikeya resides."

CHAPTER 38.

Sagara.

Here ended his tale and Visvamisra took up another narrative. "Rama, my son, there lived an ancestor of thine by name Sagara, a righteous ruler and a great hero; and Ayodhya was his capital. His heart yearned for a son, but in vain. Kesini, the eldest daughter of the ruler of Vidarbha, was his first wife, truthful of speech and righteous minded; and Sumati, the fairest of the daughters of the earth, was his second wife, the child of Arishtanemi. He retired to the Bhrigu Prasavana among the Himalayas, and along with his wives performed stern Tapas. A hundred years passed over his resolute head, when Bhrigu, the best of those that speak truth, was pleased by his Tapas, conferred upon him a boon. "A mighty race shall spring out of thy loins, and thy glory shall be unparalleled on the earth and undying. One son shalt thou have, through whom thy race shall continue on earth; and thy other wife shall give thee 60,000 sons." Thereupon the queens approached him reverently with joined hands and glad hearts. "Thy words shall ever come to pass; but which of us shall have one son and which many? Deign thou to enlighten us on this vital point." "It is for you to choose," replied the righteous Bhrigu, "one son who will continue your line or many sons, famous valiant and energetic beyond conception. Suit yourselves."

Then Kesini chose before the king a single son to propagate the race; and Sumati, the niece of Garuda, chose



60,000 sons famous and mighty. His purpose served, the king and his queens returned to their kingdom.

In course of time, Kesini, the elder, brought forth a son who was named Asamanjas, while Sumati conceived a lump of flesh. They broke it and forth issued 60,000 sons. The nurses brought them up in vessels of clarified butter, until they arrived to years of maturity.

The eldest son, Asamanjas, amused himself with throwing the children of the townsmen into the dark waters of the Sarayu and laughed at their dying agonies; so, yielding to the prayers of his subjects and to his own unerring sense of justice and duty, Sagara banished that wicked son of his, a terror to his people and an eyesore to the good. But Amsuman, his valiant son, endeared himself to all, high and low and was the idol of their hearts.

Long years after, the thought came to Sagara that he would celebrate a sacrifice. He consulted his priests and chaplains well versed in the Vedas and set about the holy rite."

CHAPTER 39.

Sagara's Horse-Sacrifice.

When the narrative came to an end, Rama said to Visvamitra with a pleased heart "Hail to thee, thou Holy One! Great is my desire to hear the story in all its details of how my ancestor celebrated that sacrifice?" Greatly amused at the eagerness displayed by Rama, Visvamitra replied with a smile. "Nothing would give me greater pleasure. See you yon abode of Snow and Ice, the sky-topped Himalaya. He is the father-in-law of the Black Throated One and faces



proudly the far famed Vindhya ; and between them lies a broad and smiling land. Regard it as one of the holiest spots on the earth, for, countless have been the sacrifices performed therein ; and your ancestor of honored memory, the righteous Sagara, celebrated his Aswamedha there. Amsuman, the favourite grandson of the monarch, was directed to go along with the consecrated horse and guard it. A mighty warrior was he, King Sagara and a famous general ; and while he was duly conducting the sacrifice, Indra assumed the shape of a Rakshasa and spirited away the consecrated horse. Thereat, the sacrificial priests cried out to the king " The consecrated horse has been taken away on this all important day. Slay the robber and bring back the horse. Such a defect as this is fraught with danger to all of us. So, see to it that the sacrifice comes to a safe and speedy end."

Thereupon, the mighty monarch turned to his sons (there were 60,000 of them) and addressed them in the pride of his power and glory. " No room see I for any Rakshasa to interfere with this sacrifice of mine, conducted as it is by such able priests as these, with souls purified by powerful Mantras. So, heed ye these words of mine ; go forth, my sons and search this sea-girt earth through and through, every inch of it if ye come not upon them. And I shall stay here, consecrated, with my grandson and the priests, till the horse come back."

Ordered thus by their honored sire, the valiant sons of Sagara issued forth with on their fearless quest with cheerful hearts. They searched the surface of the earth from end to end, but found not the horse nor the thief. Then they began to delve into the earth, a yojana every one of them, with their adamantine nails, with tridents hard as thunderbolts, and with terrible ploughshares. Whereupon, the patient Earth, thus pierced in her vitals, began to emit loud cries of distress, rendered all the more terrible by the fearful shrieks of the



dying Nagas, Asuras, Rakhshasas and other mighty creatures, whom, in their wantonness, the infuriated sons of Sagara slaughtered by thousands. Yet they dug into the bowels of the earth for 60,000 yojanas and ranged far and wide through the mountainous Jambudwipa. Thereupon the gods, the Gandhravas, the Asuras and the Pannagas, sought out the Great Ancient and addressed him with affrighted and woe-begone countenances. "Lord ! behold these wicked sons of Sagara piercing into the very bowels of the earth and slaying the creatures therein by hundreds and by thousands. Hear them shouting. ' Lo ! there goes the thief ! there is the daring wretch who has laid his impious hands ' on the sacred horse and spoiled the precious sacrifice ! and countless myriads go down before their blind fury."

CHAPTER 40.**The Wrath of Kapila.**

The Father of all beings listened to these words of the trembling Celestials who were out of their wits through fear of destruction. " This earth " said he " and everything it contains belongs to the Lord Vasudeva, who, as Kapila, supports it for all time ; and these wicked princes shall, of a truth, be consumed by the fire of His wrath. The delving of the earth and the destruction of the short-lived sons of Sagara have been fore-ordained."

The celestials departed to their abodes with a glad heart. And great was the uproar caused by the valiant sons of Sagara delving into the bowels of the earth. Having thus sought above and below, they came back to their sire and said to him reverently. " We have searched the entire earth through and through and put to death powerful and mighty beings, Gods, Danavas, Rakshasas, Pisachas, Uragas, and