

ARANYA KANDAM

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CHAPTER I

DESTRUCTION OF VIRADH

On entering the mighty forest of Dandaka, Rama saw hermitages surrounded by a halo of spiritual glory, where lived old hermits subsisting on fruits and roots, clad in barks, and versed in the Vedas. The whole place was strewn over with Kusha grass and floral offerings of worship. At some places articles of worship were kept, while at others sacrifices were going on, and there rose a continual chant of the Vedic hymns. It abounded in sweet fruit-bearing trees and there were tanks full of full-blown lotuses. Rama entered the sanctuary by unstringing his bow.

The hermits seeing Rama, beautiful like the newly-risen moon, accompanied by Lakshmana and Janaki, greeted him with sweet words. They were struck with wonder by the beauty and grace of Rama, and also at the sight of his elegant dress, and they stared at him with steadfast eyes.

They, then, asked Rama to take his seat inside a cottage where they received him with due rites of hospitality, offering fruits, flowers, roots and water, and then addressing Rama they said in a body :

"Rama! You are honourable and the defender of our faith. You are our supreme lord, and the protector of all. All pay homage and one-fourth of the income to the king who rules justly, and for this he is

entitled to enjoy all good things. You are our king, whether you reside in the forest or in the city. It is your duty to protect us. We have subdued our passions, and do not chastise anybody. So like a child in the mother's womb, we are worthy of your protection."

Saying this, the hermits offered Rama various fruits and flowers, and they tried to please Rama in various ways.

On the following day, at sunrise, Rama entered the forest with Lakshmana and Janaki and found the place abounding in various kinds of wild animals. Tigers and bears were roving about freely, and shrubs and creepers were torn by their movements, and tanks and pools rendered muddy, and there was a continual droning noise of beetles.

On arriving there Rama found a terrible Rakshasa, huge as a mountain peak, with wide mouth, sunken eyes, and a protruding belly. The monster was clad in a blood-stained tiger-skin and was roaring dreadfully by opening his wide mouth, terrible like the jaws of death, after piercing with his iron spike three lions, two panthers, four tigers, ten deer and the head of a huge tusker dripping fat.

That cannibal rushed at Rama, Lakshmana and Janaki the moment he saw them, like the God of Death and shook the earth by his terrible yells, and after snatching away Sita, he shouted from some distance, "Who are you puny creatures? Why have you entered the Dandaka forest with a woman? You have matted your locks, put on barks, and carry bows in your hands! You look like ascetics, but why do you two live

with one woman? Why have you assumed the garb of a monk and act otherwise? That beautiful woman will henceforth be my wife. I am a Rakshasa and my name is Viradh. I constantly feed upon the flesh of the hermits and rove about freely in the forest. Now I shall drink your blood."

Sita was greatly frightened by these words and she began to tremble like a plantain leaf. Then Rama with a distressful heart addressing Lakshmana said :

"Look, the daughter of king Janaka and my wife is in the lap of the monster. The desire of step-mother Kaikeyi has to-day been fulfilled. To tell you the truth, I have been more distressed to-day at the sight of Sita being touched by another than by the loss of kingdom or by father's death."

Then Lakshmana in rage and sorrow replied, "*Arya*! You are the lord of all, and I am your servant, then why do you lament like a helpless man? I shall kill this monster with a single shaft, and the earth will drink his gore. I shall hurl the full brunt of my rage against that brute, and he will fall prostrate on the ground."

The Rakshasa then cried out resounding the forest with his harsh grating voice, "Tell me who are you and where will you go?"

Rama answered, "We are Kshatriyas, born of the Ikshwaku line, and are of pure character and have come to the forest for some reason. We are also eager to know who you are."

Viradh said, "I am son of Yava, my mother is Shataprada and my name is Viradh. Having gratified Brahma by my penance and devotion I have got a boon

from him that none will be able to destroy me by any weapon. Now give up the hope of this woman and run away from this place, or I shall kill you immediately."

Rama grew angry at this and said, "Ah, thou wretched creature! You are surely seeking your death." Saying this, he at once discharged seven sharp arrows flaming like fire from his bow, which struck the monster and drew forth his blood. Viradh then let off Sita, rushed towards Rama brandishing a terrific lance, gaping wide his mouth. Rama and Lakshmana began to shower their missiles at him. Rama cut off the lance with two shafts. Rama and Laskhmana then attacked him with formidable swords, dreadful as black snakes. But Viradh caught hold of them and proceeded towards the forest dragging them by force.

At that sight, Janaki raised her hands and broke forth in sorrow, "The terrible monster is taking away truthful Rama and Lakshmana. Let tigers devour me now! I bow down to you, Oh, Rakshasa chief! Please leave them and take me instead."

At these words of Janaki, Rama and Lakshmana resolved to kill Viradh without further delay, and Lakshmana broke Viradh's left arm, and Rama his right, and Viradh fainted in agony. Rama and Lakshmana, then, showered kicks and blows upon the prostrate body. Yet the monster did not expire. Finding the Rakshasa thus invulnerable to weapons, Rama proposed to bury him alive and asked Lakshmana to dig a spacious ditch for the same, and he planted his foot upon the neck of the prostrate monster.

Hearing those words of Rama, Viradh began to

speaking, "O lion amongst men! I am about to die; through ignorance I could not recognise you first that you are Kausalya's son, Rama; he is Lakshmana and she is worshipful Janaki. I have got this terrible form of a Rakshasa through a curse. My name is Tamvaru, and I am a Gandharva. I once offended Kuvera, the Lord of the Yakshas, by my absence, on account of my attachment for Rambha, and he then punished me with a curse. Softened by my entreaties, Kuvera, at last, blessed me saying that when king Dasaratha's son Rama would slay me in battle I would get back my former state of a Yaksha. My lord! Through your grace I have been absolved from that terrible curse, and I shall now be able to repair to him. Half a *yojana* from this place there lives a pious hermit effulgent like the sun, named Sharabhanga. Soon go to him, he will do you good. My end is near. Throw me into a ditch. It is an immemorial custom for dead Rakshasas to be buried.¹ This is how we attain salvation."

Lakshmana then dug out a spacious ditch and threw the monster into it.

CHAPTER II

SAGE SHARABHANGA

After the destruction of Viradh, Rama and Lakshmana repaired towards the hermitage of Sharabhanga.

On arriving at the hermitage they saw a wonderful thing. There, they found Indra, the king of gods,

¹ This apparently refers to the custom of burying the dead instead of burning them, more antique in origin. Vide Rig Veda and also Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitter's works.

decked in heavenly jewels and clad in elegant robes, radiating a bright effulgence from his person, and worshipped by many gods who had accompanied him. He was standing there, yet his feet did not touch the ground! His chariot was stationed in the sky, yoked with yellow-coloured steeds, and at a short distance shone the royal umbrella beautiful as the moon, white as the fleecy clouds and decked with variegated wreaths. Two beautiful women were fanning him with *chowris* from his two sides, and gods and saints were singing his praise.

He was then talking to Sharabhanga : and Rama taking him to be Indra, addressed Lakshmana as follows :

“Look! What a wonderful chariot! How bright and beautiful! It shines like the blazing sun in the sky! Those horses surely belong to the king of gods of which we have heard previously. Those young men with broad chests wearing ear-rings and holding swords in their hands appear like tigers quite unapproachable for their might. They have put on red clothes and jewel-necklaces like wreaths of flames, and they appear to be of twenty-five years of age, this is the permanent age of the celestial youths. You wait with Janaki till I ascertain who is that effulgent person in the car.”

Saying this Rama proceeded towards the hermitage of Sharabhanga.

Then Indra seeing Rama coming in that direction said to the gods, “Behold! Rama is coming hither. Let us leave this place before he greets us, so he will miss us. I shall appear before him after he conquers the great difficulties and dangers that lie before him. He

will have to achieve a great thing, incapable of being performed by others."

Saying this Indra disappeared with the gods after paying homage to Sharabhanga and inviting him to the heavenly region.

Then Rama entered the hermitage with his brother and wife. At that time, the sage Sharabhanga was seated in the chamber of fire-worship. The sage received them with due hospitality and assigned a separate place for them.

Rama then asked, "Tell me, O sage! Why the king of gods did pay this visit to the *ashrama*?"

Sharabhanga replied, "My boy! I have secured *Brahmaloka* by severe penance and meditation. Indra came to invite me to that region. But I did not go there, knowing that a dear and worthy guest like you was close to my hermitage. You are pious, and I have been greatly gratified by your presence. I shall now repair to *Brahmaloka*. I have attained different regions by my religious merits, and I wish you would accept them."

Then Rama, versed in the *Shastras*, replied, "O, sage! I wish to attain blissful region by my own virtue. Now tell me where shall I take shelter in this forest?"

Then Sharabhanga said, "My boy! There lives a virtuous saint named Sutikshna. He will do you good. At a short distance flows the Mandakini through a flowery vale; proceed in the opposite direction and you will then reach the hermitage. Now I have indicated to you the way; just wait for a moment, I shall cast off this infirm body in your presence, as a snake casts off its slough."

Saying this, Sharabhangā prepared a fire and after offering oblations with *Mantras* he entered into it. The fire at once reduced his skin, flesh, bones and hairs into ashes. Then Sharabhangā assuming a youthful, effulgent body emerged from the fire. Thereafter passing the regions of the saints and the gods, he reached *Brahmaloka* and appeared before Brahma, the grandsire of all created beings, who was greatly pleased at his sight.

After the ascension of Sharabhangā to heaven, great sages as Vaikhanasas, Valakbilya, Sauprakhala, Marichipa, Ashmakuta, Patrahar, Dantalukhola, Unmajjaka, Gatrasyya, Asyya, Anavakashika, Salilabar, Vayabhuksha,¹ Akashanilaya, Sthandilashayi, Adrapatarasha and others appeared before Rama. These saints are devoted to meditation and are surrounded by a halo of spiritual shine.

They said to Rama, "As Indra is amongst the Gods, so are you the supreme lord of the Ikshvaku race and of the world at large. You have become famous in the three worlds for your valour and virtue. Full and perfect religion has fixed its permanent abode in you. You will forgive us for what we say as suitors to you. The king who receives one-sixth of the people's income but does not protect his subjects incurs great sin, while, on the other hand, he who governs his people like his sons, reaps great fame on earth and attains *Brahmaloka* after death. The king is entitled even to the one-fourth of the religious merit that is acquired by saints and hermits

¹ Some of these names signify their asceticism, as, Salilabar means one who lives on water only, Vayubhuksha means who feeds only on air.

living on fruits and roots. Rama ! You are the lord of this forest abounding in Brahmans, many of whom are losing their lives in the hands of the Rakshasas. Come and see their dead bodies. They are tyrannising over the ascetics that live on the banks of the Mandakini and Pampa lake. You are the shelter of all. Please save us ; and there is no greater protector than you."

Then virtuous Rama replied, 'O sages ! Please do not talk like that. I am your obedient servant. Since I have come to the forest to redeem father from his pledge, I shall remedy this oppression of the Rakshasas."

Having assured them, Rama went in the company of the hermits. After crossing many deep streams, Rama arrived at a lofty peak like the Sumeru mountain. A dense forest extended at its foot and Rama on entering it found a hermitage in which was seated a sage stained with mud named Sutikshna.

Approaching him, Rama said with due humiliation, "O worshipful one ! I have come to pay my respects to you. Please break your silence."

Then Sutikshna after embracing Rama, said, "O, hero ! Have you come here safely ? This hermitage, seems to have been provided with its lord. It is for your sight that I have not yet renounced this body and repaired to heaven. I have heard that you have been deprived of your kingdom and have been dwelling in the Chitrakuta. To-day, Indra came to my place and informed me about the region I have acquired by my religious merits. My boy, I now ask you for my satisfaction, to live in my hermitage with Lakshmana and Janaki."

Then Rama replied as Indra unto Brahma. "I shall attain the blissful region by my own piety, and I have heard from sage Sharabhanga of the Gautama clan that you do good to all. Please tell me where am I to live in this forest?"

Then that famous sage, Sutikshna, said, "You live in my hermitage. A large number of hermits reside here, and it is also plentifully provided with fruits and roots all round the year. Only herds of deer come to this place; they are bold but do not commit any harm. They simply bewitch the people by their tempting beauty. There is no other danger or interruption here."

Gentle Rama then said, "If I slay these deer by sharp arrows, you will be pained at heart, so I don't mean to live here long."

Sutikshna then said his evening prayers, and when night came, the sage offered Rama an ascetic's meal.

In the morning, Rama took his bath with Janaki in the translucent stream, and after saying his morning prayers went to Sutikshna and said, "We are extremely grateful for your kind hospitality; now I ask your permission to leave the place. We are greatly anxious to see the hermitage of the ascetics, and the *Rishis* with me are asking me to make haste. Allow us to go before the sun assumes a haughty look, like a low person who has acquired wealth by evil means."

Rama then greeted Sutikshna with Lakshmana and Janaki, and Sutikshna blessing them said, "Go now safely with Lakshmana, and Sita will follow you like a shadow. Behold the beautiful hermitages of the ascetics

residing in the Dandaka forest. You will find the woods in bloom and visited by deer and lovely feathered tribes echoing with the wild notes of peacocks, lakes and pools strewn with lotuses and water-lilies and visited by swans and ducks, and you will come across there beautiful fountains."

Rama then went round the sage and took his leave. Large-eyed Janaki then handed over swords and bows to their hands.

When Rama was about to set out with Lakshmana, Sita affectionately said, "My lord! Virtue can only be acquired by renouncing all low desires. There are three kinds of sins—falsehood, adultery and anger without any provocation. The last two are more grave than the first one. You have never told any lies, nor will you do in future. You have no lustful hankering for another's wife, nor will you have that, rather you are devoted to your own wife. Virtue and truth are present in you. You are truthful, learned and have control over your senses. You are firm in your vows and obedient to your father. But you are now engaged in that sinful act which one commits through ignorance by killing a creature without any offence. You have agreed to protect the ascetics living in the forest; you are, therefore, proceeding with Lakshmana with bows and arrows to the Dandaka forest. But I have become greatly anxious on account of your departure. I am thinking of your actions and of the means that may contribute to your happiness. But at every step I feel greatly anxious on thy account. I don't wish that you should go to the Dandaka forest. If you go there, you

will surely be involved in a conflict with the Rakshasas for the presence of arms highly inflames Kshatriya valour."

"My lord ! Formerly a pious ascetic was engaged in religious meditation in the calm recess of the woods. Indra, in order to disturb his religious meditation, once appeared in the guise of a warrior and kept his sword as a trust with the ascetic. The ascetic then in fear of the violation of the trust, used to roam about the forest with that sword in hand, even when he went to gather fruits and roots. From this constant carrying of the sword, the ascetic by degrees grew cruel, and at last he gave up all religious meditations and became engaged in the slaughter of all creatures. This story I have related to you just to illustrate that as fire produces change in the fuel, so contact of arms brings about a change in the human mind. My husband ! Of course, I do not pretend to give you any advice but I humbly remind you of this out of love and deep regard for you. It is not proper to kill any creature unless it does some grave injury. A Kshatriya hero should do only that much which might be necessary for the protection of the ascetics living in the forest, and nothing more. Ah ! Where are arms, where is the forest ? Where is religious meditation and where is Kshatriya valour ? These are quite antagonistic to each other. Please hold in respect what is proper to an ascetic. Resume the duties of a Kshatriya after your return to Ayodhya. You have been obliged to abdicate the throne and repair to the forest and my father-in-law and mother-in-law will be greatly pleased if you lead the life of a hermit. From righteousness comes wealth

and from wealth happiness ; in short everything comes from religion.¹ Intelligent people acquire righteousness even by torturing their bodies but religion cannot come from pleasure or happiness. My lord! You know everything, and nothing is unknown to you. Who can aspire to advise you in matters of religion? I have said all these simply from the fickleness of a woman. Consult with Lakshmana and decide your course of action."

Hearing Janaki's speech Rama said, "O noble lady ! You have justly expounded the duties of a Kshatriya out of love for me. What shall I say in reply? You have yourself said that a Kshatriya should bear arms so that there may not exist any word as 'the distressed'. Now, the hermits of the Dandaka forest in distress have applied to me for help. They are harmless people and live on fruits and roots, but the cruel Rakshasas have caused great discomfort to them, and cannibal monsters are feeding on their flesh. I have promised them all help that lies in me, and asked them what I would do. They asked for my protection and said that they could have themselves destroyed the Rakshasas by their spiritual power but that would take away much from their religious merit, so they did not wish to do that, and for this reason they have so long refrained from cursing

1 The Sanskrit phrase : *Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha* is very difficult to translate--*Dharma* apparently means righteousness, though literally it signifies religion ; *Artha* literally means wealth, but it signifies something like assets (as used in Political Economy) that is to say, the means that will enable one to obtain his objects of desire which are designated by the word *Kama*—covetousness or lust.

them. They further said that they were living in the forest depending on me. Without the slightest remorse I can give up my life, nay can even renounce you along with Lakshmana, but cannot swerve from my promise given to the Brahmans. How can I act otherwise, when I would have done that even without their asking? Janaki, I have heard with gladness what you have said out of your love and good wishes towards me. Nobody says anything to him who is not dear to him, you are worthy of your birth. You are dearer to me than life, so please approve of my desire."

Having said this, Rama proceeded towards the romantic forest with Lakshmana carrying the bow in his hand. Rama went first, Sita was in the middle and Lakshmana followed them with bow in his hand.

CHAPTER III

SAGE AGASTYA

They passed various streams, lakes and hills in their journey. They then came to a lake measuring about a *yojana*. Its water was clear as crystal and was beautiful with white and red lotuses. Aquatic birds were sporting on its surface, and elephants stood on its banks. Sweet music was being heard on its bank but no human being was to be seen. Rama and Lakshmana were greatly astonished at this, and they asked a hermit named Dharmabhrit. "It is indeed a wonderful thing. We are greatly curious to know something about it." Dharmabhrit said, "The tank is known as the Pampara; formerly, sage Mandakarni constructed it by his psychic power. Its waters never become dry. Once

upon a time Mandakarni practised severe penances for ten thousand years, being seated within this tank. The gods got frightened at this; thinking that the Rishi might ask for some of their ranks, they engaged five nymphs to decoy the hermit. The Rishi fell a prey to his passions, and those nymphs became his wives. Mandakarni then grew young by his *yogic* power and built a secret chamber for those beauties. They then lived happily with him. The sage is now amorously sporting with them, it is the sweet jingling sounds of their ornaments that you hear."

Rama then found a beautiful and bright hermitage where he lived with Lakshmana and Sita. After some time he quitted that cottage and lived at some place for some months, somewhere for a year, at some place for four months, somewhere for six months or for a month and a half, or for several months together. Thus ten years passed.

After this Rama came back to sage Sutikshna's hermitage, and one day he respectfully said, "O, holy sire! I have heard from many that the great sage Agastya lives in this forest, but this is such a vast forest that I cannot ascertain that place. Now tell me where is that beautiful penance-grove that I may go there to pay my respects with Lakshmana and Janaki. It is my earnest desire to attend upon him."

Sutikshna cheerfully replied, 'I thought that I should myself ask you to do so, but fortunately you have asked it yourself. I shall tell you where lies the hermitage of Agastya. After going four *yojanas* to the south, you will come across the hermitage of Lakshmana, brother of

Agastya. The place is beautiful and abounds in Pippali trees, and there are plenty of fruits and flowers and crystal lakes. Pass one night there, and you will find the hermitage of Agastya at a distance of one *yojana*. The spot is highly beautiful and abounds in various kinds of trees. If you are desirous of seeing him, you may start even to-day."

Rama then greeting Sutikshna set out for Agastya's hermitage with Lakshmana and Sita. Rama covered a long distance by observing the picturesque beauties of the woods, hills and streams. Rama then cheerfully observed, "Surely, the hermitage of Idhmavaha is quite nigh. Look ! How the trees are bent down with fruits and flowers, a pungent smell of the ripe pippalis is coming from the forest. Fuels and faggots are scattered here and there, and the ground is strewn with bright Kusha grass, and blue columns of smoke are rising from the woods. From what has been said by sage Sutikshna, it is clear that this is Idhmavaha's *ashrama*. His brother Agastya, for the good of mankind, has rendered the southern quarter habitable by destroying a Daitya, cruel as death.

"Formerly two formidable Asuras named Ilval and Vatapi used to live here. They used to slaughter Brahmans. Cruel Ilval assuming the guise of a Brahman used to invite in Sanskrit the Brahmans to the *Sradh* ceremony, and when the invited Brahmans came, he used to feed the Brahmans by cooking his brother, Vatapi, who wore the form of a sheep. When the meal was over, Ilval shouted aloud, 'Come out, Vatapi'; Vatapi, too bleating like a ram came out by tearing the bodies of the Brahmans. Thus they have killed many Brahmans.

Once Agastya at the request of the gods ate Vatapi, being invited to the *Sradha*. After giving him water for washing his hands, Ilval cried, "Come out, Vatapi." Then wise Agastya replied with a smile, 'Ilval! Your brother in the form of a sheep has repaired to the abode of death being digested by fire ; so he cannot come out.'

"Then Ilval hearing of his brother's death rushed towards the sage in fury, but he was at once reduced to ashes by the fiery look of the great ascetic. This is the hermitage of Idhmavaha—brother of that great Agastya who has performed that arduous feat out of pity towards the Brahmins."

The sun went down and the evening came. Rama then said his evening prayers and accepted the hospitality of Idhmavaha with Lakshmana and Janaki and passed the night there. In the morning Rama took his leave and set out for the hermitage of Agastya.

Rama proceeded surveying the picturesque woods abounding in aquatic Kadamva, Panasa, Asoka, Tinisha, Naktamal, Madhuka, Vilva and Tinduka and other flower trees. These trees were covered with flowery creepers, roughly handled by the elephants with their trunks, and abounding in monkeys and wild birds.

At this sight, Rama said to Lakshmana, "I find the place exactly as I have heard about it. The woods are green and the beasts and birds appear to be gentle. Probably the hermitage of the great sage is not far. This hermitage no doubt belongs to the famous sage Agastya who has rendered the southern quarter safe by destroying the death-like Asura. For fear of him the Rakshasa do not dare to enter this place, but only cast their looks

from a distance. From the time he has fixed his abode the rovers of the night have forgotten their former hostility and have become gentle. It is said that no danger befalls him whoever takes the name of Agastya."

"The Vindhya mountain was rising high to obstruct the rays of the sun but it has ceased to do so in obedience to Agastya's command. This is the hermitage of that long-lived and famous hermit. He is adorable, pious and is always engaged in doing good to the honest people. He will do us good if we go to him. I shall pass here the rest of the term of my exile. The Gandharvas, the Siddhas and the Rishis here pass their time in meditation and in 'spare fast.' Here is no room for any cruel, deceitful or vicious person. Here the gods, Yakshas, Patangas, Urugas live on frugal meal. Here the ascetics obtain salvation, and after casting off their mortal bodies, and assuming new forms, they ascend to heaven in cars resplendent as the sun. "Lakshmana ! We have arrived at the sacred hermitage. You go first and inform the great sage of my arrival with Janaki."

Lakshmana on entering the *ashrama* said to one of the disciples of Agastya : "The eldest son of King Dasaratha, heroic Rama, has come with his wife Janaki to see the sage. I am his younger brother. You might have heard that I am devoted to him. We have come to this dreadful forest in obedience to our father's mandate. We wish to see the worshipful Agastya ; please do what you think best.

Maharshi Agastya hearing this from his disciple said, "It is indeed my good luck that Rama has come to see me. I was expecting this. Go, my boy, just bring him with his brother and wife with due honours."

The disciple then hurried to Lakshmana and told him that Rama might come to see the great sage.

Rama then entered the hermitage abounding in gentle deer, and beheld there the seats of Brahma, Agni, Rudra, Indra, Surya, Soma, Bhaga, Kuvera, Vayu, Dhata, Vidhata, Varuna holding the noose, Gayatri, and those of Vasuki, Garura, Kartikeya and Dharma.¹

Here the sage Agastya with his disciples was awaiting the arrival of Rama. Rama on seeing that effulgent sage said to Lakshmana, "My boy ! The sage Agastya has issued from his retreat. From his solemn gravity I can infer him to be Agastya."

Thus saying Rama saluted the great sage beaming as the sun. Agastya embraced Rama and offered him seat and water for washing his feet and enquired after his welfare. After offering oblation into fire the hermit presented *arghya* and food to them according to the rites of *Vanaprastha* life. Rama sat down with joined hands when Agastya resumed his seat.

Then the sage Agastya said, "My boy ! If the guest is not received with due hospitality, even an ascetic is doomed to feed upon his own flesh like a false witness in the next world. You are king, righteous, heroic, noble and adorable ; you have graced my hermitage as a dear guest." With these words Agastya offered plenty of flowers, fruits and said, "My boy ! Indra has presented this golden, celestial bow of Vishnu beset with diamonds, made by Vishvakarma and infallible arrows glittering

1 The particular places assigned for the worship of each one of the above mentioned deities. They are the Vedic gods, but in the yoga system there are different seats or bodily postures of such names.

as the sun's rays named Brahmadatta. This inexhaustible quiver is full of arrows flaming as fire and there is in golden scabard a sword with golden hilt. Formerly Vishnu conquered the Asuras with this bow. Now take these weapons as Indra carries the thunderbolt."

Saying this Agastya, presented all those weapons to Rama, and said, "Rama ! I am glad that you have come to see me with Janaki and Lakshmana. May you be happy. I have been much pleased with you all. I am sure you are fatigued by the journey, specially Janaki must be eager for rest. This tender girl never suffered any hardship before. She has come to the forest only out of her deep love for her husband. Do that as she may feel comfortable here. She has done a very arduous thing by following you. It is the nature of women from the beginning of creation that they become attached to persons in affluence but leave them in adversity. In their attachments they are unstable like lightning, in snapping affection they are sharp as weapons, and in evil they are quick as the wind, or the winged bird. But your wife is free from all these faults, and she has thus become foremost of chaste women like Arundhati in heaven. The place will no doubt be sanctified if you live here with her and Lakshmana."

At this Rama modestly replied, "You are my superior and worthy of respect and I think myself fortunate and blessed since you have been pleased with our conduct. Now kindly indicate to me a part of the forest where there is no scarcity of water so that I may live there happily by building a cottage."

Thereupon Agastya plunged himself in meditation

for a moment and then said, "My boy! There is a highly beautiful place called Panchavati at a distance of two *yojanas* from this place. There are plenty of fruits and roots. There is no scarcity of water, and there are plenty of birds and deer. Go, build there a cottage and live happily with Lakshmana. My boy! I have ascertained your feelings by my *yoga*. You first resolved to live here but since you have already changed your mind I ask you to repair to the Panchavati. That place is not very far from here. Janaki will surely feel happy there. You will be able to protect the hermits living in that peaceful, secluded forest. You possess valour and also good manners. Yonder is the Madhuka forest. Proceed towards the north of the forest by fixing your attention on the Nagrodha trees, you will then come by a hill and close to it lies the picturesque Panchavati."

After Agastya's words, Rama saluted the great sage and proceeded with Lakshmana and Janaki, carrying the bow and the quiver with him. On his way Rama saw a formidable bird of a very huge size, and thinking it to be a monster he questioned, "Who art thou?"

Thereupon the bird replied with a sweet voice, "My boy! I am a friend of your father."

Thereupon Rama bowed down and asked his name and lineage. The bird then in the course of giving his genealogy began with a narration from the beginning of creation and said, "My boy! I shall now tell you from the beginning who were known as Prajapatis in ancient time. Listen to me. Of the Prajapatis, Kardama was the first. Then came Vikrita, Shesa, powerful Sthanu, Marichi, Atri, Kratu, Pulastya, Pulaha Angira, Prache-

tas, Daksha, Vivaswat, Aristhanemi and Kashyapa. Sixty daughters were born to Prajapati Daksha, and of them Kashyapa married eight. Their names were Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kalika, Tamra, Krodhavasha, Manu and Anala. After marriage Kashyapa told his wives to bring forth children who would be lord of the three worlds like himself. At this Aditi, Diti, Danu and Kalika agreed but some of them disagreed. Afterwards eight Vasus, twelve Rudras, twin Aswini Kumaras and other thirty-three¹ gods were born of Aditi's womb, and the Daityas² were born of Diti. Then Aswagriva was born of Danu ; and Naraka and Kalaka were born of Kalika ; Krauncha was born of Tamra ; Kraunchi, Bhasi, Shyeni, Dhritarasthri and Shuki, these famous five daughters were born of Tamra. Then Ulaka was born of Kraunchi ; Bhasa was born of Bhasi, Shyena and Gridhra from Shyeni ; swans, ducks, *chakravakas* were born from Dhritarasthri and Nata from Shuki. Nata gave birth to a daughter called Vinata. Afterwards ten daughters were born of Krodhavasha's womb and they were Mrigi, Mrigamada, Hari, Bhadramada, Matangi, Sharduli, Shweta, Surabhi, Sulakshmana, Surasa and Kadru. All the deer were born of Mrigi ; Bhalaka, Chamaras and Sumaras were born of Mrigamada ; a daughter named Iravati was born of Bhadramada, and her son is Airavata. Lions and monkeys were born of Hari's womb. Tigers and Go-langulas were born of Sharduli, elephants were born of Matangi and the elephants guarding the cardinal

1 These thirty-three subsequently in popular imagination have been elaborated into thirty-three millions.

2 Correspond to the Titans of Greek mythology.

points of the world were born of Shweta. Two daughters were born to Surabhi, Rohini and the famous Gandharvi. Bovine cattle were born of Rohini and horses of Gandharvi. Surasa gave birth to many-hooded serpents and Kadru and other snakes.

Afterwards man was born of Manu.¹ Brahmanas were born from the mouth, the Kshatriyas from the arms, Vaishyas from the thighs and the Sudras from her feet. All sacred fruit-bearing trees were born of Anala. Garuda and Aruna were born of Vinata—Shuki's grand-daughter. I am the son of that Aruna named Jatayu. Shyeni is my mother and my elder brother is Sampati. Rama, if you wish, I may be a friend to you in your forest-life. When you will be out with Lakshmana in quest of fruits, I shall protect Janaki."

Then Rama embraced him in delight and bowed to him in respect and heard from him the tales of friendship between his father and the bird. Rama then trusted him with the charge of Janaki's protection and entered the Panchavati forest.

CHAPTER IV

THE PANCHAVATI

Rama arriving at the Panchavati forest, full of ravenous animals, said to Lakshmana, "We have reached the place spoken of by worshipful Agastya. This

1 Here we get in simple folklore a story of the creation of various species of living beings, and in this gradation man comes last. Modern science has established this point beyond all reasonable doubts.

blossoming forest is Panchavati. Survey it round and select a site where we may build a cottage. Just find out a place where Janaki will feel happy and we may be comfortable in every respect, where there are tanks and where the water is transparently clear, and which abounds in fruits, flowers, faggots and Kusha grass. You are most competent in these things."

Then gentle Lakshmana with joined hands spoke to Rama in presence of Janaki, "Arya ! I shall ever serve you as your obedient servant. You yourself please select a spot and then order me to build a cottage."

Rama was greatly pleased with Lakshmana's words and then selected a highly commendable site, and taking Lakshmana there Rama said, "My boy, here is abundance of flower-trees, the ground is even and beautiful. At a short distance from this spot there is a beautiful pool interspersed with sweet-scented lotuses, pink and red, like the newly-risen dawn. There lies the Godavari spoken of by sage Agastya. The stream is always visited by the swans, cranes and the *chakravakas*. Many thirsty deer come to drink its water and blossoming trees stand on its bank. Look, there is the high range of hills with its caves and hollows. Hear the peacock's shrill cries. The hill abounds in gold, silver and copper, and for their presence it looks like an elephant with its body painted in variegated colours ! Summits are crowned with Salas, Tamalas, Palmyras, Dates, Panasas, Jalakadamba, Trimish, Mangoes, Asokas, Tilakas, Champakas, Ketakis, Shyandanes, Sandal woods, Kadamvas, Lachukas, Lakuches, Dharvas, Aswakarnas, Khadiras, Shamis, Kinshukas, Patalas and other flower and fruit-bearing

trees entwined with creepers and parasites. The place is indeed romantic. Henceforth we shall live here in friendship with Jatayu."

Then powerful Lakshmana in a short time constructed a beautiful cottage resting on graceful pillars. Its well-levelled floor was made of earth. Its bamboo-frame work was covered with strongly tied Sami branches, Kusha, Kasha, and Shara leaves. After erecting the hut Lakshmana went to the Godavari stream. After bathing in its water he plucked lotuses, gathered fruits and then returned to the cottage and after offering flowers and performing due rites for dwelling in a new house, Lakshmana asked Rama to enter the cottage. Rama and Janaki were exceedingly delighted at the sight of the cottage, and after a deep embrace Rama said in affectionate words, "My darling! I am more than delighted. You have accomplished a wonderful feat. Accept my embrace as thy reward. You are a reader of human heart. You are virtuous. When a son like you survives, father appears to be still living through you, though he is gone to the other world."

After this Rama lived happily for some time in that forest like a god in heavenly region.

After the autumn, came in the season of mists and dews. One day, at that time, Rama was going to the Godavari and obedient and humble Lakshmana followed him with a pitcher along with Janaki.

On his way Lakshmana said, "O, sweet one! The season that is dear to you has come. The year seems to have been adorned by it.¹ The skin has become rough

1 *Tilaka*—by way of decoration, on the forehead of a woman—

with dews, the earth is full of crops, water is difficult to touch, fire is agreeable. By this time the people in order to take new rice perform a sacrifice known as the Aग्रहयान for the satisfaction of the gods and dead ancestors. There is plenty of eatables in the country, and there is no scarcity of milk and articles prepared from it. Princes bent upon conquests reconnoitre the ground now. The sun's motion is now to the south. The northern quarter now looks shorn of beauty, like a woman without the scarlet mark¹ on her brow. The Himalays being by nature the home of snow have now justified its name, having the sun at a greater distance. The mid-day sun appears to be agreeable and none feels fatigued by a journey, only shade and water are unbearable now. The sun's glare has diminished, dews fall in profusion, the forest has become lonesome, and the lotuses have been destroyed by the frost. Now, the nights are always grey with frost, nobody can now lie in an uncovered place, the hours of night are long and they can only be measured by the sight of the constellation of Pushya. The splendour of the moon has fallen to the sun and the lunar disc is now always enveloped in mists, like a mirror (when breathed upon) grown misty by the vapour of breath. The shine of the full moon appears dim through frost, like Sita grown pallid by heat. The western breeze has become intensely cold. The whole forest is covered with a veil of mist, and wheat and barley crops look beautiful in the sun with cranes and

circular red mark made by some unguent substance between the two brows.

1 The season *Emense* corresponds to early winter.

braunchis in them. Golden paddy with their ears slightly bent with grains have grown brownish-yellow like dates. Its rays being diffused through mists, the mid-day sun appears like the moon. In the morning the sun's rays are feeble and yellow, and they look highly beautiful when they fall on the green grass wet with dews. Look! How thirsty elephants draw out their trunks at the touch of cold water. Ducks, cranes and swans and such other aquatic fowls, though they have arrived on the bank of the stream, do not dip in the water, as the coward does not enter a field of battle. The flowerless woods being enveloped with frosty mists at night and with dews in the morning, seem to be buried in sleep. The water of the river is enveloped in dense fog, and the sands of the river-banks are wet with dews. The presence of the aquatic birds is inferred through the mists only from their cries. Water everywhere, due to the fall of snow and mildness of the sunshine, is cold and sweet to drink. The lotuses have been destroyed by the frost, only their stalks remain, but their pollens, petals and pericarps have fallen, there is no more of their former beauty. Arya! By this time, virtuous Bharata is practicing greater asceticism at Nandigram, being overwhelmed with sorrow for his deep brotherly love for you. He has discarded the throne and all things of luxury and does live on frugal meals and lie on the bare ground. Perhaps, by this time, Bharata too is bathing in the Sarayu, being surrounded by his people. Bharata is noble, truthful, religious, of subdued senses and of sweet speech. He is beautiful. His arms are long, reaching up to the knees. his eyes are lotus-like, waist lean, and his colour is of soft

green. That lotus-eyed hero has forsaken all pleasures of life and has clung fast to you. Though not living in the forest, he is leading an ascetic life (in the city). He will surely secure heavenly bliss. It is said that a man resembles his mother in qualities, but it is otherwise with Bharata. Alas ! How Kaikeyi, whose husband was Dasaratha and whose son is Bharata, could be so cruel ?”

Rama could not bear any aspersion against Kaikeyi and said,

“My boy ! You may talk of Bharata, the lord of the Ikshwaku race, but do not blame mother Kaikeyi. Though I am firm in my resolve, but love for Bharata makes me unsteady. I do often remember his sweet delightful words sweet as manna. Lakshmana, I know not when I shall again meet Bharata and others !

Rama, after expressing his grief in those words, bathed in the Godavari with Lakshmana and Janaki. Then they performed *Tarpana* in honour of the gods and to the manes of the ancestors, and then they said their prayers to the sun and the gods. As God Rudra after bath looks beautiful with Nandi and Parvati, so Rama looked beautiful after his bath. They then returned to their cottage after performing their morning services.

CHAPTER V

SURPANAKHA

Honoured by the hermit, Rama was seated with Janaki in the cottage. At that time he looked like the moon in conjunction with the star Chitra, and was talking with Lakshmana on various things. At that time

a Rakshashi was wandering leisurely there. She was Supranakha, the sister of Ravana—the lord of the Rakshasas.

On arriving there the Rakshashi beheld beautiful Rama, dark as a blue lotus, with lotus-eyes, endowed with royal splendour whose personal beauty was like that of a Cupid, who was mighty like Indra, wore matted locks and possessed the gait of an elephant. The Rakshashi was at once smitten with love. (But lo the contrast!) Rama had a graceful countenance whereas the Rakshasi had a hedious one; Rama's waist was lean, but she had a bulky abdomen; Rama had an elegant head of hair, whereas she had coppery locks; Rama's voice was sweet, but hers was grating; Rama was young, she was old; Rama was gentle, she was fierce; Rama was righteous, but she was vicious; Rama had mellifluous accents, but her words were harsh! In a word, Rama was beautiful, she was hedious. But being maddened with desire, the Rakshasi asked, "I find matted locks on your head and bow and arrows in your hands; tell me why you have come in the guise of a hermit with your wife to this region of the Rakshasas."

Then Rama with his usual candour related to her everything. He said, "There was a mighty king by the name of Dasaratha. I am his eldest son, and my name is Rama. He is Lakshmana, my younger brother, he is greatly attached to me. She is my wife named Janaki. I have come to live in the forest in obedience to the wishes of my father and mother. Now tell me who art thou? Whose daughter are you and in what family you are born? You seem to be a Rakshasi from your form. However, why have you come hither?"

Then Surpanakha smitten with lust replied, "I am Surpanakha, I can assume different forms at my will and range about the forest by striking terror into everybody's heart. You might have heard of Ravana, the lord of the Rakshasas, he is my brother ; and supremely powerful Kumbhakarna who is subject to long sleep, and pious Bibhisana, inimical to the Rakshasas, and formidable Khara and Dushana are also my brothers. But I have even surpassed them by my prowess. Rama, You are beautiful and I have fallen in love at the very first sight. I possess wonderful powers and can go wherever I wish. I ask you to be my husband for ever. What will you then do with Sita ? Sita is deformed and ugly, and she is in no way worthy of you. It is I who am worthy of you, so look upon me as your wife. This woman, Sita—I shall devour her immediately along with Lakshmana. You will therefore be free to roam about the forest with me at your will."

Thereupon Rama with a playful smile addressing Surpanakha, began in jest :

"O worshipful lady, I am married. This Sita is my wife, and she is always with me. A co-wife will surely be highly disagreeable to a woman like you. Here is my younger brother, valiant Lakshmana. He is good-natured and beautiful and is leading a life of celibacy. He is quite ignorant of conjugal felicity, so he is desirous of taking a wife unto him ; for your beauty, this young man is, no doubt, worthy of you in every respect. O large-eyed beauty, Receive him as your husband, as the sun's rays seek for the Sumeru mountain. If you be his wife you would not have any fear of a co-wife."

Surpanakha instantly left Rama and addressing herself to Lakshmana said, "Beautiful as you are, I am the only worthy spouse of you. Now accept me as your wife. You will live happily with me in the Dandaka forest."

Then eloquent Lakshmana with a smiling countenance gracefully replied, "You see, I am myself a servant, what will you gain being my wife? Will you be content to live like a maid-servant? Ah, my red¹ beauty, I am under worshipful Rama, be therefore the younger wife of Rama, your desires will be fulfilled and you will pass your days in happiness. He will surely accept you by discarding that ugly, unchaste and lean, old hag. O, paragon of beauty, what intelligent man can remain addicted to a woman by neglecting such supreme grace?"

Hideous-looking Surpanakha, however, could not understand the joke and took Lakshmana's words to be serious, and thereupon, under the intoxication of lust, she said to Rama, "You are not showing me any affectionate regard by discarding that ugly, lean, old hag of unchaste character. So I shall devour her in your presence and shall enjoy supreme felicity by getting rid of the co-wife."

Saying this the Rakshasi, red as a burning cinder, rushed towards gazellè-eyed Janaki in extreme wrath, as if a huge meteor rushed towards the Rohini star. Thereupon heroic Rama, preventing the Rakshasi, terrible as the noose of death, spoke to Lakshmana in

1 One of the hue of a red lotus.

wrath, "My boy! Henceforth never crack jokes with a low-bred woman. Look, Janaki is half dead with fear. Punish her immediately by deforming this hedious and infuriated Rakshasi."

Thus being spoken to, powerful Lakshmana in great anger drew his sword and in the presence of Rama chopped off the ears and nose of Surpanakha. The Rakshasi was drenched in blood and burst into terrible yells, like the rumblings of a thunder-cloud, and ran away into the thick of the forest with up-raised arms.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIRST CLASH

Surpanakha then appeared before her brother Khara in Janasthana who was seated surrounded by the Rakshasas, and she fell on the ground like a bolt from the blue.

Thereupon Khara of fierce energy seeing her lying on the ground and drenched in blood asked in rage, "Rise up. Banish your fears and amazement. Tell me who has deformed your beauty? Who has hurt the black snake by his digital end, that was lying harmless? The miscreant, through ignorance, does not know that he has unknowingly drunk deadly poison and that death's noose lies round his neck. You are yourself formidable and can assume different forms at will, now tell me where had you been? Who has disgraced you thus? Who is so powerful among the gods, Gandharvas, Spirits and the *Rishis*? I don't find anybody in the three worlds that would dare injure you. However, as

a thirsty swan drinks only milk mixed with water leaving the latter, so among the gods I shall pick out and kill thousand-eyed Indra. Whose frothy blood mother-earth desires to drink, his marrow being pierced by my arrows? Upon whose corpse the ravenous birds want to feed tearing the flesh? None amongst the gods and the Gandharvas will be able to protect that wretched whom I shall attack. Sister, shake off the stupor by degrees. Tell me who is that despicable creature that humbled you in the forest by his prowess?"

Then Surpanakha said with tearful eyes, "Two sons of king Dasaratha live in the Dandaka forest. Their names are Rama and Lakshmana. They are young, beautiful and valiant. Their eyes are long like the petals of a lotus and they are clad in barks and black deer-skins. They live on fruits and roots and lead an ascetic life. They look like the king of the Gandharvas and bear regal signs on their persons. I can't say whether these two brothers are gods or demons. I have seen a perfect beauty decked in ornaments in their company, and for her they have mal-treated me. Now I desire to drink the warm blood of that crooked woman and of the two brothers, and you will have to satisfy my desire."

After Surpanakha's speech, Khara in extreme rage summoned fourteen formidable Rakshasas, terrible as death, and addressing them said, "Lo! two armed youngmen, clad in barks and deer-skin have entered the Dandaka forest with a woman in their company. Kill those men along with that wicked woman. My sister has resolved to drink [their blood to-day. Go now

and accomplish the task by your valour. She will drink their blood in delight.

At this command of Khara, the Rakshasas were swiftly despatched with Surpanakha like clouds driven by a gale.

On arriving at the hermitage Surpanakha pointed out Rama and Lakshmana together with Sita.

Rama, seeing the Rakshasas, said to heroic Lakshmana—

“Remain with Sita just for a short time, let me destroy the Rakshasas that have come with Surpanakha.”

“As you please,” replied Lakshmana.

Rama then strung his bow wrought in gold, and addressing the Rakshasas said, “Hear me. We are sons of king Dasaratha and have come to the Dandaka forest with Sita. We live upon fruits and roots and lead an ascetic life. Why do you bear malice against us? You are thoroughly vicious and tyrannic over the hermits, and at their request I have taken up this bow for your destruction. Stand there where you are; advance not a step further. If you have any love for life then go back.”

Thereupon those fierce Rakshasas, the destroyers of the Brahmanas, with red hot eyes, said to Rama, whose valour they had not witnessed as yet, “You have provoked our noble lord, Khara; you will have to lay down your life in to-day’s fight. You are alone whereas we are many, not to speak of any fight but what power do you possess that you can stand before us? This day, surely you will have to give up your arms, being vanquished by our lances.”

With these words the Rakshasas with their weapons rushed in fury towards him and threw their fourteen lances at Rama. Thereupon invincible Rama cut off their darts with his golden shafts and in great rage took up from the quiver sharp Naracha arrows, whetted on stone and glittering like the sun's rays, and discharged them at the Rakshasas, as Indra hurls the thunderbolt. Those shafts after penetrating the hearts of the Rakshasas entered the earth, like snakes into an ant-hill. The Rakshasas gave up their ghosts and fell prostrate like cut-down trees. At that sight, Surpanakha whose bleeding had ceased a little, but from whose wounds blood was still oozing out like gum exuding from a tree, ran to Khara and began to cry bitterly.

Khara seeing his sister again coming to him as if presaging some evil, broke forth in anger, "I deputed formidable Rakshasas living on flesh, on your behalf, why have you then come again and why weep so bitterly? Those are my trusted followers and wish me always good, and nobody can kill them by violent attack. It is not possible that they have not carried out my orders. Then why are you crying saying, 'Ah! My Lord!' Why are you rolling in the dust like a (crushed) snake? I am eager to know the cause. Arise, don't cry any more."

Irrepressible Surpanakha at these consolations of Khara, wiping off her tearful eyes replied: "When I first came to you with my lopped off nose and ears, you consoled me by despatching with me fourteen fierce Rakshasas, but they were all instantly killed by the heart-penetrating arrows of Rama. I have been greatly

alarmed at this astonishing feat of Rama. Hence I have again come to you for shelter. To speak the truth, I see terror all round me. Now, if you have any commiseration for the Rakshasas, root out that thorn of the Rakshasas living in the Dandaka forest. He is my bitter foe. If you cannot exterminate him, I shall give up my life even in your presence. Me seems that you won't be able to stand before him, even if you face him with your army on the field of battle. You have the vanity of being valiant, though you are not so. Ah, you are a stain to our line ! Leave Janasthana with your friends without any delay. If you cannot slay these two puny men, then you must be weak, how can you then live here ? In short, you yourself will be soon destroyed by Rama's valour. Dasaratha's son Rama is exceedingly powerful, his brother Lakshmana too is quite formidable. Look, how I have been disfigured."

Huge-bellied Surpanakha thus lamenting before Khara was overwhelmed with grief and began to cry beating her abdomen repeatedly.

CHAPTER VII

WRATH OF KHARA

Khara being thus insulted in the presence of the Rakshasas, addressing her in angry words said, "Sister, I have been greatly offended by this taunt of yours. This insult is unbearable like salt administered to a wound. Rama is a frail human being. I do not count him at all in my valour. He will die this day at my hand for his misdeeds. Now restrain your tears. Don't be frightened any more. I shall despatch Rama along with Lakshmana

to the abode of Death. Drink his blood when he will fall by my axe." Being delighted with these words of her brother she began to praise Khara again through her levity. Then Khara being first reprimanded and then praised by Surpanakha said to Dushana, the captain of his army, "Brother ! Call those fierce Rakshasas who are invincible in war, and those who revel in cruelly injuring the people, those who always carry out my wishes and those who look like dark clouds. Fetch also my wonderful scimitar, sharp Sakti, and yoke the horses to my chariot. I shall march in the van for the destruction of wicked Rama."

Then at Dushana's directions, horses of different hues were yoked to the chariot, glittering as the sun, and high as the Sumeru peak. Its wheels were made of gold, and its pole was wrought in Vaidurya gem and covered with a net-work of gold, and ornamental designs of fish, flowers, trees, hills, auspicious birds, of the sun, the moon and the stars in gold decorated the chariot, and in the car at one place arms were kept. Khara in wrath got upon the chariot. Seeing this, formidable Rakshasas holding mighty arms and banners surrounded the car. Seeing them Khara said in war-delight, "Don't delay any more. March quick to the field of battle."

Thereupon, fourteen thousand Rakshasas with swords, lances, axes, mallets, Pattish, Shulas, sharp axes, swords, wheels, burning Tomaras, dreadful Parighas, huge bows, maces, clubs, and arms resembling thunderbolts, being thus equipped for war began to follow after Khara's car. Then with Khara's permission, the charioteer began to drive the car at violent speed. The deep rumbling noise of the car filled the air.

Powerful Khara, dreadful like death, began to urge in a thundering voice his charioteer to drive fast to kill his enemies in the battle.

At that time, a sable cloud, dark as an ass, began to shower blood upon the Rakshasas with a dreadful noise, as a sign of evil omen. The beautiful horses of Khara began to tumble down on the road that was strewn with flowers. A dark circle with a red rim was seen near the sun. A huge vulture suddenly attacked the royal standard and perched upon it. Ravenous birds and beasts began to make a clamorous noise and inauspicious jackals proceeded towards the south howling fearfully, thus indicating evil to the Rakshasas.

The sky became overcast with huge black clouds, like elephants emitting intoxicating virus from their temples. Thick darkness enveloped the forest, and nothing could be discerned in that pitch darkness, not even different directions. Suddenly, the evening appeared as if clad in a cloth soaked in blood! Carnivorous beasts and birds began to utter shrill cries even in the presence of Khara. The jackals began to howl by gaping wide the red cavity of their mouths, as if belching forth fire towards the Rakshasas. Suddenly, a huge comet was seen approaching the sun and the sun became dim and suffered from eclipse, though it was not the time of eclipse. Heavy gales began to blow, and meteors like glow-worms fell from the sky during the day time. The lotuses in the tank became withered, fishes and aquatic creatures went underneath the water. The forest was covered with dusts even without a storm and the parrots began to utter piteous cries. The earth and the forest

began to shake with a terrific din. Khara was then roaring in his car, but suddenly his left arm began to throb, his eyes became wet, his voice sank and he was seized with a terrible headache ! But Khara did not pay any heed to all these through foolishness.

Seeing these ominous portents on all sides, that are sufficient to make one's hairs stand on their ends, Khara addressing his soldiers said with a laugh, "I do not care for all these portents, as the strong do not care for the weak. I shall bring down the stars by my sharp arrows on the ground, and shall bring death even to Death himself. To-day I shall not return without slaying haughty Rama and Lakshmana in battle. Let my sister, for whose sake their senses were so much perverted, be satisfied by drinking their blood. I have never been defeated in battle, and you have witnessed that repeatedly. Now, to speak of these two puny men, if I be enraged I may slay even Indra, the wielder of the thunderbolt in the field of battle."

Hearing this speech, the doomed soldiers of Khara displayed their great delight. At that time the Ganoharvas, Siddhas and the Charanas were stationed in the sky and they said amongst themselves, "Let victory attend the cows, Brahmanas and those who are held in esteem by the world. Let Rama conquer these rovers of the night as Vishnu with discus conquered the Asuras in yore."

During that time the celestials were talking amongst themselves, Khara pressed forward with great impetuosity and Shyena-gami, Prithugriva, Jajna-satru, Vihan-gama, Durjaya, Karaviraksha, Pārusha, Kalkamuka, Meghmali, Mahamali, Varashya, Rudhirashan—these

twelve chiefs went with him. Mahakapal, Shulaksha, Pramatha and Trishira followed Dushana. As the planets move towards the sun and the moon, so the fierce Rakshasa army rushed towards Rama and Lakshmana in lust of battle.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ENGAGEMENT

When fierce Khara came near the hermitage, seeing all sorts of disturbances and evil portents round him, Rama became sad¹ thinking of the ill-fate of the Rakshasas and addressing Lakshmana said. "Look, Lakshmana, all these dark omens presage destruction to the Rakshasas. Dark clouds are raining blood! Wild birds are uttering piteous shrieks. And my shafts are flaming in war-delight and my gold-plated bow is throbbing with restless energy. Our victory is sure and the Rakshasas are doomed. A severe conflict is imminent. My right arm is throbbing repeatedly, and your face too appears to be beaming with delight. When the faces of those that are engaged in a battle, grow pallid, it forebodes that their end is near. Hark! The Rakshasas are blowing their trumpets. It is the duty of the sagacious people to take precautions before they are actually faced with any danger. Therefore take shelter with Janaki in some inaccessible crag screened by dense shrubs and creepers being equipped with bows and arrows. I request you to

¹ To feel for one's enemy rushing unwittingly to the brink of ruin is indeed divine. This is a note-worthy trait in Rama's character.
—Translator.

hide there soon. I don't wish that you should act otherwise, you are a hero and I doubt not that you can slay these Rakshasas by your valour, but I wish to kill them myself."

Thereupon, Lakshmana taking bow and arrows entered a cave with Sita. Rama satisfied with Lakshmana's action put on a flaming armour and thereupon shone like a column of fire in the midst of darkness, and began to resound the quarter with the twangs of bow and patiently waited for the advent of the Rakshasas.

The celestials, eager to witness the issue of the fight thronged in the sky and prayed for Rama's victory.

By and by the Rakshasa hordes were seen on all sides. Some were shouting, some were talking, some were jumping in anticipation of victory, some were yawning and some were blowing their trumpets. A terrible, deafening noise filled the forest, and wild beasts ran to secluded quarters. Then the vast Rakshasa army, like a sea, made its way for Rama. And Rama too skilled in warfare advanced to meet the host casting careful glances all round. When he met Khara's army, Rama stretched his formidable bow and swiftly took up shafts from the quiver and in his rage he became quite incapable of being looked at like the Doomsday-fire. On all sides stood the Rakshasas holding bows and other arms in their hands, with their blazing armours and various ornaments and they appeared like a mass of blue clouds at sun-rise.

Khara in front of his army got sight of Rama near the hermitage. At this he asked his charioteer to drive towards Rama, and the charioteer drove the car where Rama stood alone. Shyena-gami and others roared at

the sight of Khara who then shone like Mars in the midst of a cluster of stars, and then striking broad-chested Rama with hundreds of shafts began to roar in battle with delight. Other Rakshasas in the meantime hurled various weapons at Rama, and they began to shower their missiles on him, as if a huge cloud was raining over a firm mountain-peak. Then Rama encircled by the Rakshasas looked like God Siva surrounded by the ghosts and spirits in the evening twilight.

Rama began to ward off their blows and weapons. As the mountain is not shaken by a thunder-bolt, so Rama was not moved by their striking, but being pierced with arrows his whole body became covered with blood, and then he looked like the evening sun surrounded by red clouds.

After this Rama bent his bow into a semi-circle and began to discharge arrows at ease, and those dreadful shafts, effective as Death, shone as tongues of flame in the sky. A number of Rakshasas were slain by them. Heroic Rama by his shafts cut down bows, shields, armours, flag-staffs, and arms of the Rakshasas. Horses, elephants with their riders were struck down by his arrows. The infantry fell in number. As dry wood is consumed by fire, so the Rakshasas were scorched and overwhelmed by Rama's arrows. The Rakshasas in fury hurled their lances and axes at Rama, but Rama warded them off; the Rakshasas being smitten by Rama's arrows ran to Khara for protection.

Dushana assuaged their fear and advanced to meet Rama with bow in hand. The fight renewed in great fury, and the Rakshasas hurled all their maces, stones

and stocks at Rama. At this Rama in anger aimed a flaming Gandharva weapon at the Rakshasas. Innumerable shafts issued from his bow. The sky was covered with his arrows. The Rakshasas were struck with wonder at his quickness. They could not ascertain when he took his shafts from his quiver and when he discharged them from his bow. They only witnessed a continual shower of shafts and it infested the sky like the rays of the sun. The ground was covered with the corpses of the Rakshasas. Some were dead, some were on the point of death, some were rolling in agony in the dust, and they were rending the sky with their terrible yells. The battle-field became strewn with heads decorated with turbans, arms with various ornaments and gloves, with cut down limbs, umbrellas, chowris, flags, chariots, dead horses, elephants and broken arms. Dushana finding the army scattered by Rama's shafts asked five thousand fierce Rakshasas to charge. They never turned their back on the field of battle, and their impetuous charge was quite tremendous. At Dushana's command they began to shower their missiles on Rama. Rama warded off all their blows and stood there like a bull with half-closed eyes (as if quite unconcerned). The slayer of foes, Dushana began to cut down Rama's arrows. At this Rama grew highly enraged and cut down his bow with a razor-like shaft, four horses with four shafts, and fell down the head of the charioteer with a crescent-shaped arrow and pierced his heart with three arrows. Thereupon Dushana took up a formidable Parigha¹; it was

1 We have lost all clues as to the exact nature of the weapons used in former times. All that we know is about the bow and the

plated with gold; studded with sharp iron *sankus* (pikes) and moistened with the fat of his foes, and with it he rushed towards Rama. At this, Rama with two shafts cut down his two arms with their ornaments and protecting gloves. Instantly the huge Parigha rolled down like a broken flag-staff of the banner of Indra, and Dushana himself fell down on earth like an elephant whose two tusks have been broken down. At this powerful Mahakapal, Sthulaksha, Pattisha and Pramathi rushed towards Rama with their axes. Heroic Rama received those doomed generals with his sharp arrows as one receives at ease his guests. He cut down Mahakapal's head, crushed Pramathi, and Sthulaksha fell down like a lopped off tree. Thus Rama destroyed in no time five thousand soldiers of Dushana.

Hearing this news Khara was greatly enraged and addressing his forces, he said, "You see, heroic Dushana has been destroyed with his five thousand soldiers by this wicked man. Now, kill that man with the help of your various weapons."

Khara then rushed forward, and Shyena-gami, Prithu-griva, Jajna-atru, Vihangama, Durjaya, Karaviraksha, Parusha, Kalkamuka, Hemamali, Sarpashya, and Rudhirashana—these twelve generals—rushed towards Rama and began to shower their shafts on Rama. Rama then began to destroy their forces with arrows ornamented with diamond and gold. As the trees are destroyed by lightning so his arrows resembling fire with smoke, wrought havoc amongst the Rakshasas. He slew

arrow, but that was not all. There are descriptions of arms which correspond to the fire-arms of our time.—Translator.

hundreds and thousands of them by the Kirnas, and the Rakshasas being smitten by his arrows covered the earth with their bleeding bodies. As the Rakshasas fell with their dishevelled hair, the battle-field appeared to be strewn with the Kusha grass, and the Dandaka forest for their stream of blood turned into a veritable hell.

Thus Rama on foot and alone destroyed fourteen thousand Rakshasas, and of the Rakshasas there only Khara and Trishira survived.

Khara, finding his troops thus destroyed, rushed towards Rama like Indra with his upraised thunderbolt. Thereupon Trishira came near Khara and said, "O, chief of the Rakshasas, I am a formidable warrior, you please refrain from going to the risks of a fight, but send me instead. I shall kill Rama, and I swear by my arms that I shall surely slay Rama in battle, capable of being destroyed by the Rakshasas. This day, either Rama will meet with his end at my hand, or I shall meet with mine at his. Just refrain for a moment from the fight, and be a witness to it. If Rama is killed, you will return to Janasthana with great delight, or if I die, go forward to meet him in battle."

At this Khara said, "Then advance." At his word Trishira instantly got upon a resplendent chariot yoked with horses and rushed forward like a hill with three peaks and after showering arrows on Rama like a raining cloud, he roared in exultation in a voice as deep as that of a wet kettle-drum. Rama began to rain his shafts incessantly on Trishira. Then the two fought like a lion and an elephant against each other. Trishira discharged three arrows aiming at Rama's brow. Thereupon Rama

grew exceedingly angry and said, "Ah, is this your might? Your arrows have struck my forehead like shafts of flower. Now bear my darts."

Saying this Rama in rage pierced Trishira's heart with fourteen snake-like arrows, then with four bent shafts he brought down the four horses and with eight shafts the charioteer of Trishira and cut down his lofty standard by one arrow. Trishira then wanted to get down but Rama with three arrows in extreme rage cut down three heads of Trishira. And the Rakshasa instantly fell down emitting reeking blood on the field of battle.

Seeing Trishira thus fallen, the remnants of the army ran away in fear from the field, just as a flock of deer quickly runs away at the sight of a hunter.

Khara was greatly alarmed at Trishira's death and by the destruction of his troops which Rama effected quite single-handed. He was distressed and was seized with great despondency and fear.

CHAPTER IX

DEATH OF KHARA

Then Khara in great despair rushed towards Rama violently twanging his bow and repeatedly discharging from it *Narachas* like blood-thirsty, angry snakes, as in the days of yore Namuchi rushed after Indra, or as the *Rahu* runs after the moon. He repeatedly twang the string of his bow and moved about the field of battle by displaying his skill in arms. Rama too covered the sky with irresistible arrows, glowing as sparks of fire. The shafts of the two heroes cut off the sun's rays. It was a

deadly fight, each of the heroes tried their utmost to kill his opponent. As the driver strikes the elephant with the goad, so Khara struck Rama with *Nalikas*, *Narachas* and sharp *Vikirnas*. Khara was then seated in his chariot, and at that time he looked like Death himself holding the noose in his hand. Rama was then fatigued on account of his fight with *Rakshasa* hosts, yet Khara considered him to be formidable. And as the lion is never afraid of shy deer, so lion-like Rama was not at all frightened at the sight of Khara.

Gradually Khara came near Rama as a moth is drawn by the glare of the flame, and with great lightness of hand cut down the bow of Rama with the arrow fixed on it, just at the place where it was grasped. Then in great rage he discharged seven arrows like thunderbolt which after severing the joints of Rama's armour struck his person. Thereupon Khara roared in heroic pride.

At this, the armour slipped from Rama's person and in his rage he shone like a burning flame. Rama then took up the formidable *Vaishnavi* bow producing a deep rumbling noise, given by *Agastya*, and rushed towards Khara, by fixing shafts provided with bent knots and golden feathers.

Rama at once cut down Khara's golden standard and it fell into pieces on the ground, as if the sun went down at the will of the gods. Thereupon Khara in anger smote Rama's chest with four arrows. Thus being wounded Rama in rage discharged six arrows and pierced Khara's head with one shaft, his arms with two and with three crescent-shaped arrows his chest. After this Rama took up thirteen sharp glittering *Narachas* and cut down the

yoke of Khara's chariot, with one shaft, four horses with four shafts, the driver's head with one, and the Trivenu of the chariot with three, and two wheels with two arrows and his bow with one, and easily pierced Khara's body with another. Khara then being deprived of his bow, chariot and horses jumped down from his car, with a mace in his hand. Meanwhile the gods above were greatly eulogising Rama for his valour.

Rama seeing Khara alighted on the ground with mace in his hand said with a gentle but a stern voice,—

"Khara, you have done a despicable thing, being the leader of a great host with elephants and horses. He who is engaged in cruel and injurious acts towards others can hardly save himself even if he be the lord of the three worlds. Whose acts are against the interests of all—people crush him like a fell snake. As a Brahmin's wife, who unwisely eats hailstone¹ dies, so the people delight to see the end of him who through greed or lust becomes addicted to vice. What have you gained by killing the pious hermits of the Dandaka forest? He who is hateful, cruel and vicious soon meets with his fall, though rolling in wealth, like an uprooted tree. In fact, as the tree blooms in its season, so vice brings forth its evil consequences in due time. As one can immediately perceive the effect after taking poisonous food, so the evil consequences of sin can readily be perceived. O Rakshasa, I have come to the forest at the command of the king for the punishment of the vicious. These golden shafts of mine will penetrate your body and enter

1 A piece of ancient superstition.

the earth like snakes. With your army you will follow the pious hermits whom you have killed in the forest. Those hermits in their chariots will witness you despatched to hell. You may now strike me as you like, do what you like, I will bring down your head to-day like a palmyra-fruit on the ground."

Hearing these words Khara in red-hot eyes, broke forth with a laugh, "Rama ! Why do you boast ? Why do you think so high of yourself by slaying the common Rakshasas ? Those who are really heroic never boast of their own valour. It is only a vile and despicable Kshatriya like you that brags of his self. In the thick of fight who advertises about his own heroism by citing his pedigree ? In fact, as a piece of brass, glittering like gold, betrays its inherent stain, being tested by fire prepared with husks, so you have betrayed your fickleness by your self-eulogy. Rama, Don't you see me standing before you with my mace, like an immovable mountain-peak variegated with minerals ? I can destroy you and all others, like Death with this club of mine. I have many things yet to say, but I must refrain, as the sun will immediately go down, and then there might be some interruption to the fight. You have killed fourteen thousand Rakshasas. I shall wipe the tears of their wives and children by killing you to-day."

Saying this Khara threw his mace like a flaming thunderbolt at Rama. That mace of Khara began to burn trees and creepers into ashes. But Rama instantly cut that mace into pieces, and it fell on the ground like a snake deprived of its venom by the power of spell.

Then virtuous Rama said with a laugh, "Khara,

you have given the utmost proof of your valour. Now, I find how inconsiderable is your might. You were so long bragging in vain. Look! Your mace has been cut into pieces by my shafts. You are a humbug. You thought you would kill your enemy by that, but that belief is gone. You have just now said that you would wipe the tears of the friends and relations of the dead warriors, but that boast will prove to be idle. You are extremely wicked and mean. As the (bird) Garuda stole nectar, so I shall rob you of your life. The earth will to-day drink your gore when your head will be severed by my arrows. You will then with lopped-off arms and a dusty body embrace the earth like a damsel difficult to win. When you will be buried in eternal sleep, the helpless hermits of Janasthana will freely roam about without any fear. This day, the hideous Rakshasis, frightful to look at, will run away with tearful eyes in distress, and those low-born women whose husband you are will be overwhelmed with grief. Ah, cruel wretch, it is through your fear that the ascetics could not perform their sacrifices freely."

Thereupon Khara broke forth in harsh accents :

"In spite of real cause of fear you are indifferent. You are a braggart, and though your end is nigh, you have no control over your tongue. Those whose days are numbered, on account of their weak intellect cannot decide what is proper or what is improper."

Saying this Khara pursed his lips and with an angry frown uprooted a Sala tree and then with a deep roar he hurled it against Rama, crying, "Rama, thou art doomed." Thereupon, heroic Rama cut down the tree

with shafts and in rage resolved to kill Khara. The corners of his eyes became red with anger and he began to perspire all over the body. He began to discharge his arrows incessantly, and foaming blood flowed in torrents from Khara's wounded body. Being greatly smothered by Rama's arrows and rendered furious by the smell of blood, Khara rushed towards Rama in fury. Rama seeing Khara thus coming towards him stepped back two or three paces and took up an arrow blazing like fire given by Indra. As the giant Darkness¹ was reduced into ashes by the angry look of Rudra in the Sweta-forest, as Vritra fell struck by the thunder-bolt, as Namuchi was slain with foam, or as Vala with thunder, so Khara fell being struck by the arrow.

At this, the gods above were struck with wonder. They showered flowers on Rama and beat their drums of victory in joy and said amongst themselves—

"Look ! In what short time Rama has killed Khara and Dushana with fourteen thousand Rakshasas. Wonderful is his valour ! What great fortitude he has displayed like Vishnu !" Saying this they went to their respective abodes.

After this, the ascetic saints headed by Agastya came to greet Rama in joy and addressing Rama said, "My boy, this was why Indra came to the sacred hermitage of Sharabhanga and this was the reason for

1 These Vedic stories are bold allegories of some notable astronomical or natural phenomena, as Vritra means a cloud and death of Vritra means clouds driven by the thunder. I have, therefore, taken the liberty of translating Andhakara Asura as giant Darkness.

which the hermits brought you here under the plea of seeing the sacred *asharamas*. Henceforth we shall live safely in the Dandaka forest."

After the heroic Lakshmana issuing from the mountain fastness with Janaki greeted Rama in great delight. Rama being honoured for this victory entered the hermitage. Then Janaki with moonlike beautiful face saw that all the Rakshasas had been slain and Rama was safe. Her heart was filled with delight and she embraced him again and again.

CHAPTER X

THE MESSAGE

In that great fight only one Rakshasa named Akampana survived ; he hurriedly left Janasthana and appeared before Ravana and delivered the message saying, "O King, the Rakshasas of Janasthana with Khara have been killed. I have alone with extreme difficulty somehow managed to come here."

As soon as Ravana heard this from Akampana's lips he burst forth in red hot eyes, as if scorching everything by the fire of his rage, "Akampana, who being desirous of death has destroyed Janasthana ? Who is to exit from this world ? I am Death of Death ; even Indra, Kuvera, Yama and Vishnu can't be safe by doing any injury to me. In my anger I can destroy Death itself, can burn Fire, can resist the course of Wind and can reduce the Sun and the Moon into ashes by my energy." Thereupon Akampana with joined hands asked for protection in faltering accents and after receiving his permission and assurance said,—

"O King, there is a warrior named Rama, son of Dasaratha. He is young, beautiful and of lustrous, green hue. He has mighty, well-shaped arms, and high and broad shoulders. His valour is quite peerless. This Rama has killed Khara and Dushana in Janasthana."

At these words Ravana began to breathe heavily like a serpent and asked, "Has Rama come to Janasthana with Indra and other gods?"

Akampana replied, "O Lord of the Rakshasas, Rama is the foremost of the bowmen and possesses celestial arms. He has got a younger brother named Lakshmana. He too is equally powerful. His face is beautiful like the full-moon and his voice is deep like the rumbling of a tambour.

"Rama is united with Lakshmana, as fire is strengthened by the wind. He is king of kings, and know it that none of the gods have come with him. His shafts, as soon as they were discharged, began to devour the Rakshasas like a five-mouthed serpent, and wherever the Rakshasas fled in fear, they found Rama stationed before them. In truth, this hero alone has ruined your Janasthana."

Ravana replied, "Akampana, I shall immediately start for Janasthana for the destruction of Rama and Lakshmana."

Akampana said, "My lord, listen to me what I have to say about Rama's valour. When that hero is enraged, there is none who can resist his prowess in battle. He can turn the course of a flowing river, can bring down the stars and planets from the sky, and raise the submerged earth by his arrows. He can resist

the current of the ocean, the course of wind, can overflow the land by breaking the shores, and can destroy all creatures and create them anew, As it is difficult to attain heaven, so it will be difficult for you to defeat him with all the Rakshasas. He is incapable of being slain by the gods or the Asuras, but I tell you of a device for his destruction. Please listen to me with attention. He has got a beautiful wife called Sita. She is in her bloom of youth and gracefully adorned with ornaments. Her beauty strikes every one with deep wonder ; she is indeed a jewel among women. Not to speak of a human being, no goddess, no nymph, no Gandharvi, no Pannagi is equal to her in beauty. Somehow enchant Rama in the forest and then carry away Sita. It is sure, Rama will not survive the separation of his wife."

Ravana approved of the proposal and after a moment's reflection said, "Akampanā, I shall start even this morning alone taking with me my chariot[†] only, and return with Sita to the city of Lanka in great triumph."

Saying this Ravana proceeded in a shining car yoked with asses and it shone like the moon in the sky among a mass of clouds.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT WAR LORD

After crossing a long distance Ravana arrived at the abode of Maricha, the son of Taraka.

† Maricha himself received Ravana and offered him a seat and water to wash his feet, and treated him with

rare meats and drinks. He then asked, "O King, is everything well with the rovers of night? I have great misgivings in my mind seeing you alone coming here in such great haste."

Thereupon Ravana replied, "Rama has slain the indestructible Rakshasas of Janasthana with their leaders. I shall now carry away his wife, just help me in this undertaking."

Hearing these words of Ravana, Maricha said, "O Lord of the Rakshasas! Tell me who is that enemy in the guise of a friend that has mentioned about Sita before you? Perhaps you insulted somebody, and he has inspired this evil intention in you. Who has advised you to run off with Sita? Who wishes to cut off the head of the Rakshasas? He is no doubt your greatest enemy who has incited you in this matter. He is trying to extract the fangs of a snake by your agency. Tell me who has induced you to this wicked course. You were happy; who has struck you on the head? Behold, Rama is like an infuriated elephant, his pure ancestry is his trunk, valour is his temporal sweat, two arms are his tusks. Not to speak of challenging him in a fight, you can not even stare at him. Rama is like a formidable lion, his movements in the field of battle are his manes and joints. His duty is to destroy skilful Rakshasas warriors like a flock of deer. Sharp sword is his teeth and arrows constitute his body. It is not proper for you to provoke that sleeping lion. Rama is like an ocean, the bow is its alligator, swing of his arms is its mud, heavy fight is its water, shafts are its billows! O King, it is not desirable to face that ocean. Be

pacified and go back to Lanka. Live happily with your own wives and let Rama live in peace with Sita in the forest."

At these words of Maricha, Ravana departed for Lanka.

In the meantime Surpanakha seeing the destruction of fourteen thousand fierce Rakshasas with Khara, Dushana and Trishira, yelled in grief and being greatly agitated by these tremendous feats of Rama came to Lanka, ruled by Ravana.

On arriving there, she saw Ravana effulgent like a column of fire, seated on a golden throne raised on a golden dias and his counsellor sat in front of him, as the gods surround the throne of Indra. The great hero with gaping mouth was dreadful to look at like Death itself. He had ten heads, twenty arms, wide mouth and ample chest. He bore all the royal signs on his person, his hue was like the mild shine of blue gem (Lapis Lazuli), his teeth were white. He wore gold ear-rings on his ears and was clad in elegant robes. The gods, spirits or saints could not defeat him in battle. He bore on his person the scars left by Indra's thunderbolt and by the discus of Vishnu and of other weapons in the war between the gods and the Asuras. The marks of striking by the tusks of Airavata were still visible on his breast. He could churn the ocean, uproot mountains, and crush gods. He was the violator of others' wives, enemy to sacrifices, and forcibly took away Soma-drink from the place of sacrifice. This great hero after defeating Vasuki in the city of Bhogavati carried off Takshaka's darling wife. He brought Puspaka chariot defeating Kuvera,

that could travel to any place at will ; in his anger he destroyed the heavenly Nandana garden and Chaitrarath forest and obstructed the course of the sun and the moon in the sky. This victorious hero formerly passed ten thousand years in religious meditation and pleased Brahma by offering his ten heads to him ; and on account of the boon received from Brahma he was devoid of any fear of death from Gandharvas, Pishachas, reptiles, birds and all creatures except man. A celestial garland hung round his neck. He was tall like a mountain, his eyes were large and bright. He was cruel, fierce, harsh, hater of the Vedas and the terror of all creatures.

Surpanakha, stupefied with fear, beheld such Ravana, her brother. Then Surpanakha in great anger broke forth before the councillors, "Ravana, you are wilful and intoxicated with lust, you don't know what great danger awaits you. People never honour a king who is greedy and is addicted to sensual pleasures, as they do not prize the fire of funeral pyre. The kingdom of the king who does not himself discharge his duties is doomed to ruin. The king who does not employ envoys and does not present himself in due time to his subjects and who has lost his independence,—people shun such a king from distance, as an elephant avoids mud of the river-bed. The king who is in the hands of his ministers and does not look after his kingdom, prosperity is never noticed in it like a rock submerged in the ocean. Ravana, you are fickle, there is not a single spy in any part within your jurisdiction. Then how can you hope to rule in constant hostility to the gods, and Gandharvas and

Danavas. You are foolish like a child, and you don't know even what is essential for you. How can you then hope to rule? The king, whose spies, treasury and policy are under another's control is no better than a common man. The kings who learn about their impending dangers through their spies are reputed to be far-sighted. But you have no spies and your councillors are mediocres; therefore you do not know about the destruction of Janasthana. Single-handed Rama has killed fourteen thousand Rakshasas and Khara and Dushana. He has given protection to the hermits of the Dandaka forest. You do not realise what great peril is impending over the State. This shows you are careless and have no independence. People do not help a king who is haughty, uncharitable and deceitful, even in difficulties. The king who is self-conceited and angry, is slighted by all and is destroyed even by his friends and relations in times of peril. No body does his work, nor anybody is afraid of him. That king is soon dethroned and becomes poor like a man of straw. Some useful purpose may be served even by dry woods, stones, or dust, but no useful purpose is served by a dethroned monarch. Like a piece of cloth that has been worn out, or like a trodden garden the king who has been deprived of his suzerainty becomes useless even though competent. But nothing concerning the kingdom is unknown to him who is careful, virtuous, grateful and has presence of mind and there is no possibility of his fall. The king sleeps with his eyes shut, but is ever awake in his policy and one can incite his pleasure or anger, so he is never slighted anywhere. Ravana, since you are ignorant of the destruction of the Rakshasas, it

proves you are most foolish and do not possess all these qualities. You never care for anybody. You do not realise situation¹ of anything. You are quite incapable of discerning between virtues and vices. The ruin of your kingdom is therefore inevitable."

Haughty Ravana, the lord of untold riches, hearing of his vices from Surpanakha's lips, was plunged in deep thoughts.

CHAPTER XII

RAVANA ROUSED

Thereafter Ravana in great anger asked Surpanakha, "My darling, who is Rama? What is his prowess? How he looks? Why has he come to the inaccessible Dandaka forest? What is the nature of the weapons with which the Rakshasas were slain and who has disfigured you?"

Thereupon, Surpanakha angrily replied, "Ravana, Rama is beautiful like Cupid, his arms are long, eyes large, and he is clad in bark and deer-skin. He discharges *Narachas* like deadly venomous snakes by bonding his bow, furnished with gold rings, and that looks like the rainbow—the bow of Indra. He is so quick in the field of battle that no body can discern when he takes up the arrows and when he discharges them or when he bends his bow! As Indra destroys crops by hailstorms, so only the destruction of troops is noticed and nothing else. This great warrior alone on foot killed Khara and Dushana with fourteen thousand formidable Rakshasas within three *Dandas* (an hour or so), and thus has pro-

1 In the original "you have no idea of time and place."

tected the hermits and removed all dangers to the Dandaka forest. He has spared me because it is sinful to kill a woman.

"He has got a brother named Lakshmana. He is powerful, energetic, invincible and victorious like Rama, and he is highly devoted to Rama, as if he is Rama's right hand and his second self. Rama's dear wife lives in their company. She is always engaged in doing good to her husband. Her eyes are drawn up to her ears, face is like the full moon and her hue is like that of polished gold. She is a perfect beauty. Her nose is beautiful, her hair glossy and her nails are well-shaped and of reddish tinge, her waist lean, hips heavy, breasts high and plump. She looks like the beauty of the forest and as the Goddess of Wealth. No goddess, no Gandharvi, no Kinnari, no Yakshi is like her. In a word, I have not seen such a woman on earth. That fortunate man whose wife she will be and whom she will embrace cheerfully, will be more long-lived than Indra in the worlds. Ravana, that good woman is worthy of you and you are worthy of her. It is for you that I wanted to carry her away, but cruel Lakshmana cut my nose and ears. To speak the truth, you will be agitated by the sight of her beauty. Now step forward for triumphal success. If you approve of what I have said, then throw yourself unhesitatingly into the undertaking. Considering that Rama and Lakshmana are quite helpless, proceed to secure Sita. I have narrated everything about the destruction of Khara and Dushana and of the Rakshasas of Janasthana. Do what you think best under the circumstances."

Hearing this stirring tale from Surpanakha, Ravana held a deep consultation with his counsellors and after listening to their counsel he secretly entered his stable.

Entering the stable Ravana asked the charioteer to yoke the horses to his car, upon which the charioteer soon appeared with an excellent car. It was made of gold and ornamented with jewels. The car was adorned with spectral faces in gold. The chief of the Rakshasas, Ravana, got upon the car and proceeded with a deep rumbling noise like that of a cloud towards the Lord of waters. A white umbrella spread over his head, two white chowris were on his two sides and his body was adorned with ornaments. The great warrior looked quite splendid in beautiful dress. He was the great enemy of the gods and slayer of the *Rishis*. He had ten heads, twenty hands and his colour was like that of a blue gem. In his journey he appeared like a hill with ten peaks, or a cloud followed by a flock of cranes.

Gradually Ravana arrived near the sea beach. On arriving there he found a range of hills and spacious abodes with lakes and tanks of crystal water. At one place there stood plantain and cocoanut trees and at another place stood Tals and Tamalas. Birds and snakes have taken their shelters in these places, and Kinnaras and Gandharvas were freely roving there. Great saints who have conquered their desires, Charans, Vaikhanasha, Valkhilya, Aja, Masha, and Marichipa were engaged in religious meditation. Sportive nymphs and beautiful damsels of heaven wearing heavenly ornaments and garlands were sauntering in the place. That was the haunt of the gods feeding on nectar and it

was ever cool by the sea-breeze. There was plenty of Lapis Lazuli stones, and ducks, cranes, and frogs were ever croaking there. The amber cars decked with garlands of those who had attained heavenly region by their penance were also to be seen. There stood sandal wood—the source of sweet extract, Aguru, of excellent perfume, at one place stood Kokkala trees bearing sweet-scented fruits, at another place there were blossoms of Tamala, thickets of black pepper. Dried up heaps of conches and corals were scattered here and there. There stood gold and silver mountains, somewhere flowed pleasant rills and fountains. There were cities crowded with horses, elephants and chariots, and full of grains, wealth and gems of women.

Ravana thus proceeded, breathing the pleasant sea-breeze and surveying all these things round him. In his way he found a deep green Banyan tree under whose shade the hermits were absorbed in meditation. Mightly Garuda sat on one of its branches with a huge elephant and tortoise for his meal. As soon as he perched upon the branch, it gave way under his weight. Under its shade the saints named Vaikhanasha, Valkhilya, Aja, Marichipa and Dhumra were engaged in religious meditation. Garuda out of compassion towards them flew away in great speed holding with one claw the broken bough hundred *Yojanas* long, and the elephant and the tortoise in another, and after going a great distance he appeased his hunger by devouring those two huge animals. After that his strength was doubly increased and he became eager to steal nectar. Thereupon, he carried off nectar from well-guarded Indra's

palace, by breaking off the iron-net. Ravana found that Banyan tree called Subhadra standing on the sea-shore.

Then after crossing the ocean Ravana arrived at a beautiful asylum. There lived Maricha on frugal diet, clad in black deer-skin and wearing matted locks.

CHAPTER XIII

MARICHA AGAIN

Maricha received Ravana with due honours and offered him a seat and water to wash his feet and after offering him food worthy of gods, he questioned him with cogent words.

"Is everything well with Lanka? Why have you come here again?"

Ravana said, "Maricha, I am indeed in distress and you are my only help in difficulty. I shall immediately tell you everything that has happened, just listen to me.

You know Janasthana where my brothers Khara, Dushana and my sister Surpanakha and carnivorous Trishira lived, and other Rakshasas also resided there under my directions. They were fourteen thousand in number and they could perform mighty deeds and were obedient to Khara. They always tyrannised over the virtuous ascetics of the forest. They were engaged in a fight with Rama, and that man—Rama, without exchanging any angry word, single-handed killed all those fourteen thousand Rakshasas. He has killed Khara, Dushana and Trishira and rendered the Dandaka forest free from all fears.

"Maricha, Rama who along with his wife has been

angrily banished by his father, that weak and the lowest of the Kshatriyas, has destroyed all the Rakshasas. He is vile, crooked and haughty and fearless, greedy and of bad character. He has no religion and does always evil to others. That stupid fellow without any provocation forcibly cut my sister Surpanakha's nose and ears. Now, I intend to carry his wife Sita by force to my abode. Please help me in that undertaking. O hero, if you be on my side along with brother Kumbhakarna and others, I am not afraid of the gods, You are most competent, come to my assistance. There is none equal to you in might, in resourcefulness or in devising means ; you are a warrior and a wizard. Uncle, it is for this reason that I have come to you, and first hear what you will have to do for me. Assuming the form of a golden deer with silver spots frisk about Sita. At your sight, Sita will surely induce Rama and Lakshmana for securing you. Then, when those two will be out on that mission, I shall easily carry away Sita, as the Rahu steals the moon-shine at ease. Rama will be greatly weakened by the separation of Sita and then I shall succeed in destroying him easily.

Maricha's face grew dark as he heard Ravana's words. He was greatly alarmed by the proposal and being almost half-dead sucked his dry lips and stared at him with winkless eyes. Afterwards Maricha for the good of Ravana as well as for his safety sorrowfully began :

"O king, there is no dearth of men who will always speak sweet words, but rare is the speaker of unpleasant but wholesome truths, so rare is he who

is inclined to listen to it. You are fickle and since you have no spies, you do not know Rama looking like Indra and powerful as Varuna. If he does not destroy all the Rakshasas in his anger, it will be good enough to us. Sita has been born for your destruction and you will be soon in great trouble on account of her. You are highly wileful and Lanka under your rule will come to ruin. A king who is wicked and wileful like you, soon meets with his end and with his kingdom, friends and relations.

"My boy, Rama has not been cast off by his father, and don't consider him as greedy, disreputable, haughty or the meanest of the Kshatriyas. He is virtuous and wishes good to everybody. He has come to the forest for fulfilling the pledge of his father, deceived by Kaikeyi. It is for their good that he has come to the Dandaka forest discarding kingdom and royal luxury. Ravana, Rama is neither wicked nor stupid, nor under the sway of his senses. Falsehood never attaches to him. So it is not proper for you to talk about him in that vein. He is virtue personified and is devoted to truth. As Indra is the king of gods, so he is the king of all. Now, how do you dare to take away Sita by force from him. Sita is protected by her chastity and devotion. As it is impossible to rob the sun of its light, so it is impossible to snatch away Sita from Rama."

Ravana, don't rush into fire-like Rama whose sword and bow and arrows are the tongues of flame. Don't go near death-like Rama by casting aside your kingdom, happiness and love of life. There is no limit

to the prowess of him to whom belongs Sita. Rama is the protector of Sita, and you will never succeed in carrying her off. Sita is dearer to Rama than his life, and you will never succeed in subduing that devoted woman, untouchable like a flame. What will you gain by your vain efforts? I tell you that as soon as Rama will meet you on the battle-field, your end is certain. What shall I say more? Life, happiness and kingdom are three rare things. Consult with your pious counsellors like Bibhisana and others as to the course of action in this matter. Think of the pros and cons of this act, ascertain your own power and the might of Rama, and do what will be ultimately good for you. In my opinion, it is not advisable to fight with Rama. Listen to me, I shall again tell you what is really good for you.

"At one time possessing the strength of thousand elephants, I used to roam over the earth. My body was huge like a mountain, colour blue like that of a cloud, had gold ear-rings on my ears, and a crown on my head. I used to rove in the Dandaka forest taking a *Parigraha* and thereby striking terror in the minds of the people and I fed upon the flesh of the hermits. At that time, one day the pious *Rishi* Visvamitra went to king Dasaratha and said that he had been greatly afraid of Maricha and asked for Rama's help for the protection of sacrificial rites. Thereupon virtuous Dasaratha replied that Rama was only sixteen, that he had not as yet received full training in arms and he wanted to go himself with his vast army for the destruction of that Rakshasa. Visvamitra replied that Dasaratha's valour was well-

known in the three worlds, that he even protected the gods in battle, but none but Rama was match for that Rakshasa, and though Rama was a mere boy, yet the Rakshasa would not be able to fight with him. So saying he took Rama with him. Rama protected Visvamitra and his sacrifice by stretching his bow in the Dandaka forest. At that time, beards did not grow on his face. He was a beautiful lad, and his colour was soft green. He was then in the state of Brahmacharyya. He had a single robe, crested raven-locks waved over his head and he wore a gold chain round his neck. Like the newly-risen moon he illumined the whole forest by his resplendent beauty.

"After this, being haughty for the boon received from Brahma I went to the *ashram* of Visvamitra. Seeing me entering the hermitage with raised arms ready to strike, Rama without any undue haste or anxiety coolly strung his bow.

"Through my foolishness I despised him as a mere boy and rushed towards the sacrificial altar of Visvamitra. In the meantime Rama discharged an arrow and I fell unconscious into the sea hundred leagues away! My life was spared because he did not intend to kill me at that time.

"After a long time I regained my consciousness and returned to Lanka. Thus I was saved.

"Though Rama was then young in years and not fully trained in the use of arms, yet he killed my other associates and followers.

"Now I ask you not to commit any hostility towards Rama, or ruin and disaster will surely befall you, and

you will bring miseries for nothing upon all the Rakshasas, living in societies and fond of sports and festivities, and Lanka full of golden palaces will be reduced to ruins for this.

"Even the virtuous who commit no sin are ruined in the company of the vicious, as the fishes perish in a poisonous pool inhabited by snakes. After this, for your own fault you will witness the destruction of the Rakshasas, clad in bright dress, adorned with celestial ornaments and their bodies perfumed with sandal, and then the remnants of your train will run away in different directions for shelter, some alone, some with their wives and you will find Lanka besieged, in flames, and reduced to ashes,

"O king, there is not a greater sin than to carry away another's wife. You have thousands of ladies in your seraglio, be content with them and thereby save the Rakshasa race. If you want to enjoy your kingdom, wealth, coveted life, friends, beautiful wives and honour for a long time, then never act against Rama. I am your friend and I ask you repeatedly not to do this. If you slight my words and insult Sita by force then you will, surely, with your friends and relations, meet death, vanquished by the shafts of heroic Rama.

"O king, I was somehow saved at the time of Visvamitra's sacrifice, but just listen what has occurred quite recently. Without being humbled, even at the risk of my life, I again entered the Dandaka forest with two Rakshasas in the form of deer. My tongue was like that of fire, teeth large, and horns sharp. Assuming that formidable form of a deer, I used to roam about

fearlessly in the Dandaka forest and began to feed upon the flesh and blood of the hermits and thereby putting an end to all religious practices. Wild animals of the forest were frightened at my sight.

"In the course of my ravages I saw pious Rama living on spare diet, and also saw honourable Sita and mighty Lakshmana. At the sight of Rama the memory of old enmity revived and I at once rushed for his destruction in great rage. By that time Rama discharged three arrows at me. They came flying with the velocity of the wind like flaming thunderbolts. At that I stepped aside at a little distance, but the other two Rakshasas were immediately killed. Thus being saved from Rama's arrows I have been leading the life of an anchorite. To speak the truth, under the shadow of every tree, I find Rama clad in bark standing like death with the noose¹ in his hand. And through fear I always see thousands of Rama before me as if the whole forest is pervaded by Rama's presence. I startle even in my dreams at his sight. I see Rama where there is nothing, and startle at names beginning with R such as Ratna² and Ratha³. In fact, Rama's prowess is not unknown to me, and it is not possible for you to fight against him. If he desires, he can kill even Vali and Namucha. Whether you fight against him or not, if you want to see me alive, don't

¹ It is said that at the time of death, Yama casts the thread of destiny like a noose round the dying man's neck and drags out the reluctant real being, encased in astral body, from this mortal abode of flesh, probably hence Death is represented holding a noose in his hand.

² Jewels.

³ Chariot.

talk about him in my presence. Many pious men with their families on this earth have met with their destruction for another's misdeed. The same case may be with me. O Lord of the Rakshasas, do what you like but I shall not follow you.

"Rama is exceedingly mighty and intelligent ; he will surely destroy the race of the Rakshasas. Very well, just tell me what great wrong Rama has committed by killing Khara in battle who challenged him in fight for Surpanakha ? O king, I am your well-wisher and dear friend, if you don't pay heed to my words then you will be destroyed with your dear and near ones even to-day."

CHAPTER XIV

RAVANA'S REPLY

As one desirous of death does not take any medicine, so Ravana, whose end was nigh, did not agree to these reasonable words of Maricha, but harshly replied : "Ah, low-born wretch, you have advised me what is highly improper. But your words will prove futile like seeds fallen on a barren soil.

"You will never succeed in this way to dissuade me from my hostilities towards that foolish and despicable human being who could renounce his parents, friends, kingdom and everything at the bidding of a woman. I shall carry away in your presence his darling wife Sita. This is my resolve and not even Indra with host of gods will succeed in dissuading me. You could have spoken like this, if I had doubts in any matter and had I asked for your advice as to its propriety and impro-

priety, or for its ways and means. A counsellor, who is wise and wishes well when questioned about anything should reply humbly with joined hands before his master and should point out what is good or favourable to his master, as sanctioned by polity. The king who is particular about his dignity rejects even well-meaning words if they are in any way insulting or contradict his opinion. A king assumes the spirit¹ of the five gods :— Agni, Indra, Chandra, Yama and Varuna.

"For this haughtiness, might, kindness, repression and contentment are found in him. So you should honour the king on all occasions. Maricha, I am your guest, but being ignorant of court manners and through your stupidity you have used harsh expressions towards me. I never asked for your opinion about the merits and demerits of my contemplated act ; I only asked for your help, so it is highly unbecoming to talk in this vein. However, you will have to help me in my undertaking. Now listen to me what you will have to do. You will assume the form of a golden deer flecked with silver dots and stray about in the sight of Sita in Rama's hermitage. Sita will be struck with wonder at your sight and will request Rama to capture you without delay. When Rama will follow you for that purpose,

1 In the original the word Rupa means forms but here it means the spirit or element each of the gods produces in particular. Agni (Fire) producing haughtiness, Indra (Jupiter) prowess, Chandra (Moon) generosity, no doubt a gentle quality, Yama (Pluto or Death) power of repression or punishment and Varuna (Neptune, in Sanskrit he is also the presiding deity of wine hence) producing contentment or cheerfulness.

decoy him to a great distance and then cry in Rama's voice—'Alas, Sita ! Alas Lakshmana !' Hearing that, Lakshmana at the importunities of Sita and out of his deep brotherly love will proceed towards the direction of Rama. When both of them will thus leave the hermitage, I shall carry off Sita, as Indra brought Sachi. Maricha, I offer you half of my kingdom, do this and then go wherever you like. Now come, I shall follow you in my car to the Dandaka forest and thus deluding Rama I shall return with you to Lanka after procuring Sita.

"But if you don't comply with my request I shall kill you even this day, so you will have to do it for fear of death. He never wins good reputation who acts against his sovereign. What shall I say more ? If you act against me, surely your life will be in peril ; knowing this to be certain, do what you think best."

Being thus commanded by Ravana, Maricha boldly replied in angry words, "O Chief of the Rakshasas, who is that wicked that has advised you to rush to your ruin with your children, counsellors and kingdom ? Who is that vile person that has been unhappy at the sight of your happiness ? Which foolish person has pointed to you the gate of death under the pretext of indicating you the means ? Which mean fellow has instigated you to be ready for such an act ? He wishes to encompass your ruin by your acts. Your enemies are comparatively weak and they wish to see your destruction by a formidable foe. O king, the counsellors who do not restrain you finding you deviating from the right course deserve death. Then why do you not yourself put them to death ?

When a self-willed king treads upon a wrong path, honest counsellors restrain him, but I find it to be otherwise in your case. Kings can acquire virtue, wealth, fame and objects of desire even residing in palaces, but when the king goes wrong, destruction visits the people. In fact, the king is the fountain-head of righteousness and honour. He should therefore be warned at every step. That king's kingdom comes to ruin who is unruly and haughty, as a car is dashed to pieces by wreckless driver. The subjects of an irritable king who acts against the welfare of the people become imperilled like a flock of deer protected by a wolf. I shall not be least sorry if I lose my life even now in the hands of Rama, but I am really sorry to think that you will be soon destroyed with your army. That hero will soon kill you after slaying me. I shall consider myself rather fortunate in meeting death at his hand. Know it for certain that I shall die as soon as I meet him, and you will also meet death with your near and dear ones for carrying away Sita. If you succeed with my help to carry off Sita, Lanka will surely be reduced to ruins. Ravana, I am your well-wisher and friend, and I ask you repeatedly to stop, but you do not brook my words. When death marks one as his own, the words of a friend become unbearable to him, no doubt."

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRANSFORMATION

Maricha again spoke to Ravana, the ruler of Lanka, with a sorrowful heart: "Ravana, let us now depart from the place. If Rama with bow in his hand sees me again, I shall surely be killed. None will be able to

rescue me alive by his prowess from his hands. You will also be killed. Rama is like Destruction to you. You are unrighteous. What can I do for you? May you be happy! Let me now take my leave."

Ravana was delighted at Maricha's words and after embracing him warmly said, "Uncle, You have now bravely expressed yourself to fulfil my desire. Now I recognise you to be real Maricha, so long you seemed to be a different person. Now get upon my jewelled car, that courses through the sky and is yoked with asses. After alluring Sita go wherever you like, and in opportune moment I shall carry her off by force."

Then Ravana and Maricha got upon the heavenly car and soon arrived at the Dandaka forest seeing various towns, villages, forests, streams and hills on their way. Ravana then alighted from his car and clasping Maricha's hand said, "Uncle, there stands Rama's *ashram* surrounded by plantain trees. Now expedite the thing for which we have come."

Thereupon, Maricha in an instant resumed the form of an enchanting deer. Its horns were glistening like the finest jewels. Its ears like lotus-petals were made of blue gems and its mouth, as if, was made of red and blue lotuses. Its arch neck was little raised, its belly was made of sapphire, its flanks were pink like Madhuka flowers and its colour was like the tint of a red lotus, soft and lovely, its hoofs were made of dark blue stones. It was of lean thighs and firm joints. Its body was flecked with silver dots and sparkled with the sheen of diverse metals and its little upraised tail shone like a rainbow. The green forest and the cottage of Rama was lit up by its wonderful beauty.

Then the deer in order to tempt Sita began to stray about hither and thither, sometimes browsing on creepers and leaves and then entered the plantain grove. Afterwards to attract Sita's notice, it began to move about slowly through the Karnika woods. Sometimes it galloped, sometimes it slowed its motion, sometimes it returned to its former place in wild sport, sometimes it squatted upon the ground, sometimes it approached Rama's cottage behind a flock of deer and again returned to its former place following another herd. Thus it skipped about hither and thither. Other deer of the forest came near it at its sight but no sooner they came they ran away at the smell of his body.

Maricha was most fond of venisons, but somehow he restrained his appetite for this disguise.

In the meantime, while Janaki, whose glance intoxicates like wine, was busy in gathering flowers and was straying about through the Karnika, Asoka and Mango groves she beheld this golden deer bedecked with gems.

She fondly gazed upon the wonderful deer with eyes expanded with admiration and surprise. The deer, too, saw the darling of Rama and skipped about to and fro, illuminating the whole forest by the splendour of its beauty.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DELUSION

Seeing that wonderful deer, Sita, of gold-like resplendent hue, called aloud in great delight, "O Lord, soon come hither taking Lakshman with you." Again and

again she gazed upon the deer in delight and again and again she called aloud her husband.

Being thus summoned by Sita, Rama hied to her side taking Lakshmana in his company and espied the deer.

Then Lakshmana expressing his suspicions said, "Arya! Meseems Maricha has assumed this form of a deer. Previously in the guise of a stag, he destroyed many princes who came for hunting in this forest. Maricha is a great sorcerer and he has assumed the form of this beautiful deer by magic. It is impossible for such a jewelled deer to exist on earth. It is surely a dark incantation, there is no doubt about it."

But Janaki, under the influence of a spell, interrupting Lakshmana's speech broke forth with a cheerful smile, "My Lord, that beautiful deer has captivated my mind, please capture it. We shall sport with it. Many a Chamara, Srimara, Rik, monkeys and Kinnaras visit our hermitage, they are lovely, no doubt; but none is half so beautiful, resplendent and quiet. I have never seen anything like it. This golden deer, variegated in colours and beautiful like the moon, stands before me as the light of the forest. O, how beautiful! How lovely! O, what a voice! This wonderful deer is drawing my mind. It will indeed be a wonderful feat, if you can capture it alive. After the period of our exile when we shall regain our kingdom, this deer will be an ornament and beauty of our seraglio. To Bharata, mothers-in-law and all of us it will always be an object of wonder. If the deer cannot be secured alive, its beautiful skin will be of great use to us. I shall spread this golden skin over the grass and shall sit upon it. It

is improper for a woman to command her husband for her own interest, but to speak the truth, I have become greatly enamoured of that animal."

Hearing these words of Janaki, Rama cast his glance upon the deer with golden skin and sapphire-like horns, with diamond tips, beautiful as the first blush of dawn or the milky way¹ and in deep amazement said, "Look, how eager is Sita for that deer! This deer will lose its life to-day for its superb beauty at my hand. Not to speak of this earth, there is not one like it in the Chaitraratha forest. How its golden down is evenly arranged downwards and upwards! How red and flaming is its tongue that shines like a drinking cup of sapphire, and its flanks are bright like conch and pearl! Who is not attracted by the sight of this beautiful deer? Princes either for sport or for meat kill deer, and in the course of their hunting they even collect many gems and precious metals. These riches obtained from the wild that fill their coffers are no doubt better than those obtained from other sources, like objects of enjoyment obtained with the very desire of those inhabiting the heaven. Political economists define that to be wealth which people, desirous of wealth, pursue with a fixed determination. Now Janaki is desirous of sitting with me on this fine golden skin. Perhaps the skin of Kadali, Priaki, Pribeni, or of goat is not equal to it. My boy, you consider it to be a Rakshasi magic, then surely it deserves to be killed. Formerly, this cruel Maricha killed

1 In the original—"like the orbit of the stars," but as it fails to convey the idea of beautiful or luminous, so I have taken the liberty of rendering it as the milky way.

many princes and ascetics. Vatapi was digested by Agastya. Since this wicked Maricha wants to overcome me, he will be killed like Vatapi. Now put on your armour and protect Sita carefully. It is our duty to protect her. If this stag be Maricha I shall surely kill him, or if it be a real deer, I shall return with it. Look how eager Sita has become for that deer-skin. So long I do not kill it, remain in cottage with Sita. I shall soon return with its skin. Lakshmana, powerful Jatayu is intelligent and expert, protect Sita with vigilance with his help."

Warlike Rama having said this to Lakshmana carried a sword with gold hilt and equipped himself with a bow bent at three places, and with two quivers.

Seeing Rama thus set out, the deer concealed itself in fear and then appeared again. Rama in quick paces proceeded towards the deer, and he saw everything illumined before him by the halo of its beauty.

At that time, the deer was alternately casting glance upon Rama and then darted away from him. At times it went outside the range of the arrow and at times it came within the reach of his hand. Thus it tempted Rama. Gradually fear of death agitated its mind and made it restless, and it began to run fast, as if bounding through the air. Thus at one moment it became invisible, but the next moment it showed itself at a distance. Thus the deer appeared like the moon peeping through scattered clouds, and thus it gradually drew away Rama to a great distance from the cottage.

Thereupon Rama, desirous of securing the deer, was at the same time much provoked and tempted. Thus

being fatigued in the chase, Rama sat on the green turf under the shade. During that time the stag appeared at a distance along with other deer. Rama again ran to capture it. At this the deer was greatly alarmed and disappeared at once and again appeared at a distance behind the screen of a tree. Thereupon Rama resolved to kill the deer and discharged from his bow a sharp arrow glittering like the sun's rays. That deadly shaft like a flaming snake struck the heart of Maricha. At that blow, he bounding high like a palmyra tree raised a terrible yell. His life was about to ebb and in his last moments he cast off his assumed form of a deer. He then remembered Ravana's words and thought of the means that might induce Sita to send off Lakshmana from her side, so that Ravana might carry her off in secrecy. He then considered Ravana's plan to be the best, and he cried in the voice of Rama, "Alas Sita! Alas Lakshmana!"

His counterfeit form of a deer was gone and he assumed the hedious form of a huge Rakshasa.

Rama finding the Rakshasa bathed in blood and rolling in dust remembered Lakshmana's words that it was Rakshasi magic. It was no doubt true, he thought, but he had killed Maricha. "But at the time of death the Rakshasa gave up his ghost crying 'Alas Sita! Alas Lakshmana!' Heaven knows what will Janaki do hearing that sound, and what will happen to Lakshmana!" He started at this thought. He was greatly alarmed at this thought and became deeply sad.

He then killed another deer and was swiftly returning to the cottage with its meat.

CHAPTER XVII

SITA'S ANXIETY

Here Janaki hearing a cry coming from the forest in the voice of Rama said to Lakshmana, "Lakshmana, go and ascertain what untoward thing has happened to my lord. He is crying in distress. I have distinctly heard his voice. I have become restless with anxiety. Go and protect him. He is asking for protection being in the grip of the Rakshasas formidable as lions. Run to him quickly."

But Lakshmana thinking of Rama's directions was quite reluctant to go. At this, Janaki was beside herself with rage and said, "You are not going to Rama's help even under these circumstances. You are his enemy in the guise of a friend¹. You wish for his death in order to secure me¹. It is clear to me that just for your lust for me you have refrained from going to your brother. You have not the least love for your brother, therefore you pray for his disaster. This is why you are so calm in his absence, ostensibly following whom you have come to this forest. If he dies I see no necessity for keeping my life."

1 Sita was no doubt mad with anxiety and there was every justification for her fears for Rama, yet such a base insinuation against a brother like Lakshmana who had renounced his happiness and future and followed Rama like a devoted servant is at least unworthy of Sita, if not anything else. Dramatic necessity for this tragic fate was indeed imperative and the poet found it hard to make Lakshmana disobey Rama's injunctions unless there were such cruel imputations which sets Sita's anxiety for Rama and Lakshmana's sense of honour in juxtaposition.

When Janaki like a frightened deer said all these in a distressed mind, Lakshmana replied, "O worshipful lady, even the gods, the giants, the Gandharvas, the Rakshasas and the *sarpas* can not defeat your husband. I do not find anybody in the three worlds a fit match for Rama. He is invincible, so it does not behove thee to utter such words. Rama is not present, and it is not proper to leave you alone in the forest. Even the strongest cannot withstand his prowess. If all the people of the three worlds be united with Indra and other gods, they will be defeated by the valour of Rama. Be comforted and banish your sorrow. Rama will soon return after slaying that golden deer. What you have heard is not his cry, nor any supernatural voice. It is the magic of that wicked Maricha. Noble Rama has left you under my care. Therefore I do not dare leave you alone. You see, we have incurred the hostility of the Rakshasas by the destruction of Janasthana and for the death of Khara. Those malicious devils in order to delude us talk like this in the forest. Therefore don't at all be anxious for Rama."

Janaki then harshly replied with her eyes red in anger, "Ah cruel wretch, the defiler of your line! Shame on your disgraceful conduct! You are speaking thus because you desire Rama's disaster and there is nothing to be wondered at this, you are hypocrite, wicked and an enemy to your kith and kin. You wicked villain, it is either at the instigation of Bharata, or at your own initiative that you are deceitfully following Rama just for me. But your desire will never be fulfilled. How can I desire for another having enjoyed the company of lotus-

eyed Rama of sweet complexion like that of a blue lotus ? I shall give up my life even in your presence. I shall not live even for a moment without Rama."

Hearing these horrible words of Janaki, gentle Lakshmana said with joined hands, "Worshipful lady, you are a goddess to me, I dare not reply to your words. It is not at all strange for a woman to use unjust and improper words, it is rather the nature of a woman, and it is everywhere to be found. They are fickle, irreligious and crooked, and they bring about family dissensions. At any rate, I can no more bear your harsh words. They are torturing my ears like burning shafts piercing through them. The sylvan gods are my witnesses. I was behaving properly towards you, but you have abused me in extreme. Shame upon you, since you suspect me of such a base thing. It seems your ruin is nigh. I was simply obeying the mandate of the eldest brother, but you have accused me on account of your womanly nature. May good beride you, I am going where Rama is. I have great misgivings in my mind on account of the dire situation that has arisen. May the deities of the forest protect you ! May I find you here after returning with Rama."

Then Janaki replied in tearful eyes, "In absence of Rama I shall either enter into fire, or into the waters of the Godavari, or I shall put an end to myself either by hanging, or by drinking virulent poison, or I shall throw myself from a great height. But I shall not touch any other person but Rama." Saying this Janaki, began to weep and strike her breast¹ repeatedly. Thereupon,

1 In the original it is belly.

Lakshmana was greatly distressed and tried to console Sita. Janaki remained silent. Lakshmana then bowed to her with joined hands and looking repeatedly at her, proceeded towards Rama with an irritated mind.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE MENDICANT

In the meantime, Ravana assumed the guise of a mendicant, wore a piece of silken cloth, bore a tuft of lock on his head, he held an umbrella in his hand and his feet were shod in sandals. From his left shoulder slung a staff and a water-pot. Wearing this guise of a Bhikshu, he drew near Sita in absence of Rama and Lakshmana, as darkness approaches the evening in absence of the sun and the moon, or as the baleful planet, Ketu, draws near the Rohini star in absence of the moon. Thus wicked Ravana saw Sita seated in the cottage. Seeing him gazing at her with flashing eyes, the wind ceased to blow and the trees of Janasthana stood motionless, even the swift Godavari stopped her impetuous course in fear.

Then Ravana in the false guise of a mendicant, like a (treacherous) well hidden in the grass, came near Sita as the (evil) Saturn draws near the lovely planet, Chitra, and he stood mute casting his glance on her.

Bathed in tears and with a distressed heart, Sita was waiting in the cottage lamenting for her husband, yet her face was beautiful like the full moon, her lips red like the Bimba fruit, her teeth lustrous and her eyes expanded like the petals of a lotus. She was dressed in

yellow silk and was illumined by the halo of her beauty.

Ravana was at once smitten with lust, and citing the Vedas he began to praise her greatly and thus he began with an humble air, "Ah, my beauty of golden hue ! By wearing a lotus wreath you look like the lotus itself ! Perhaps you are Modesty's self, or Beauty, or Honour, or Fortune, or a Nymph or Rati ranging at will. Your teeth are even, glossy and pointed like Jasmine buds. Your eyes are crystal-clear, whose ends are tinged with red and adorned with deep black pupils. Your hips are heavy and plump, thighs are round like the trunk of an elephant. Your breast, high and plump, with their thick and pointed teats is like two closely placed palms, and adorned with jewels, seems to be ever waiting for an embrace. O, my beauty of winning smile, as the current of the river carries off its bank, so you have stolen my mind. Your waist is so slim, hair so dark ! To tell the truth, no Goddess, no Gandharvi, no Yak-hi, no Kinnari is like thee. In short I have never seen a damsel like you on earth. Such superb beauty, such exquisite grace, this prime of youth and this living in seclusion has made me quite anxious on thy account. Leave this forest, it is not at all meet for you to live in this place. It is the hunt of fierce Rakshasas who can assume different forms at will. A prosperous city, a beautiful palace, and a romantic garden are only fit abode for thee. Ah, my beauty, the garland on your neck, the sweet smell of your body, your apparel and even your husband seem to be the very best. Are you in any way related to the Maruts, Rudras or the Vasus ? That you are a goddess

is palpable. This forest is not visited by the Gandharvas or the Kinnaras. It is the abode of the Rakshasas, then how could you come here? Here lions, tigers, bears, hyenas, monkeys and herons roam about freely. Do you not fear them? Are you not afraid of wild, infuriated elephants? Now tell me who art thou? To whom do you belong? Whence and wherefore have you come to this dreadful Dandaka forest visited by the Rakshasas?"

Then Janaka's daughter seeing Ravana, in the guise of a Brahmana, received him with due rites of hospitality and offered him seat and water to wash his feet, and said, "Meal is ready."

At that time she could not neglect Ravana seeing his grave appearance and clad in red and carrying a *Kamandalu*. In fact, from various signs she considered him to be a Brahmana and invited him as a Brahmana ought to be. "*Vipra*, take your seat here, accept this water for washing your feet. This woodland meal has been cooked for you. Enjoy it freely."

Ravana, for his destruction, thought of carrying away Sita by force. Sita was then waiting for Rama and Lakshmana. She stretched her eyes for their sight, but she saw only vast, extended green forest on all sides.

CHAPTER XIX

THROWING OFF THE MASK

Then Ravana, dressed as a mendicant, asked her introduction. Janaki thought, "He is my guest and a Brahman, if I don't speak out everything he may curse me now."

She said, "I am the daughter of Janaka, king of Mithila. I have been married to Rama and my name is Sita. After marriage I passed twelve years happily in my father-in-law's house. On the thirteenth year, the king consulting with his ministers thought of installing Rama on the throne. Everything was ready for the coronation ceremony, but worshipful Kaikeyi begged of her truthful husband two boons, one for the installation of Bharata and the other for the exile of Rama. She said, she would give up her life by abstaining from food, if Rama was installed to the throne. King Dasaratha tried to dissuade her by promising immense riches, but she did not agree. Rama was then twenty-five and my age was eighteen. Truthful and gentle Rama went to his father for the installation ceremony but Kaikeyi harshly said that the king had ordered for Bharata's installation and Rama's exile for fourteen years. 'Rama, go to the forest,' said she, 'and keep the pledge of your father.'

"Rama readily agreed to her proposal, and acted accordingly. Rama will give, but won't take anything in return, he speaks the truth and never any falsehood. Thus he leads his life. Heroic Lakshmana is his step-brother. He has followed us with bow in his hand and observes an ascetic vow. He is a great help to Rama in battle. Rama has entered the Dandaka forest like a hermit. We have thus been deprived of our kingdom by Kaikeyi. Take a little rest, you will surely be allowed to live here. My husband will soon return with venison by killing different animals. Now *Vipra*, tell me your name, your clan and why you are travelling alone in the Dandaka forest ?"

Thus being questioned by Sita, Ravana began in dreadful words, "Janaki! I am Ravana, the lord of the Rakshasas, whose prowess is dreaded by men and gods. Seeing you clad in silk and of golden hue, I can no more be happy with my wives. I have secured a number of beautiful women from different places, thou dost become the foremost queen of them. I possess a great city called Lanka, surrounded by the ocean and resting on hills. If you be my wife, then you will saunter about in the garden of Lanka with me. Five thousand well-dressed women will wait upon you as maids of honour. Then you will no more like to reside in the forest."

At this, Sita was highly enraged and slighting him said, "I shall ever follow Rama who is as steady as the Himalayas and deep as the ocean. Like the Banyan tree he is the shelter of all. He is honourable, truthful and auspicious. I shall go to him who is mighty as a lion and the foremost of men. Being a jackal how do you aspire after a lioness?"

"As one cannot touch the rays of the sun, so you won't be able to touch me. Ah, you low-born wretch; since you wish for the darling of Rama, you no doubt see before you hundreds of golden trees.¹ You want to pluck the teeth of a hungry lion or the fangs of an angry snake. You want to retire in safety by drinking virulent poison, or holding the Mandara hill with two hands. You might as well wish to brush your eyes with needles, or may lick a sharp razor with your tongue. You might as well try to swim the ocean

1 A premonition of death.

tying a weight round your neck, to pluck the sun and the moon, to bind burning flame with a piece of cloth, or to walk freely over iron pikes. The difference between Rama and you is as great as between a lion and a jackal, between a streamlet and the ocean, between nectar and gruel, between gold and iron, between sandal paste and mud, between an eagle¹, and a crow, between a peacock and a common waterfowl,² between a vulture and a swan. If you carry me away when this mighty bowman Rama is alive, you will surely be destroyed, as a fly that sucks on clarified butter."

Saying this gentle Sita began to shake like a plantain tree.

Then death-like Ravana frowned in anger and putting Sita to fright said, "Janaki, I am Ravana of formidable might and am the step-brother of Kuvera. As people fear death, so the gods, Gandharvas, *Pishuchas*, *Sarpas* and birds are afraid of me. Once I fought a duel with Kuvera and defeated him by my prowess. Since then he has left Lanka and is residing in the Kailash mountains. I have captured by force his *Puspaka* chariot that can go wherever it wills. I now journey through the sky in that chariot. Even Indra and other gods fly at the very sight of my angry face. Where I happen to be, there the wind blows gently in fear, the sun assumes a mild look, the leaves of the trees cease to flutter and the rivers cease to flow. Across the ocean there is my capital Lanka like Amaravati—the heavenly city. It is inhabited by formidable Rakshasas and is surrounded

1 In the original the words are Garuda.

2 Magpie, an aquatic bird.

by a white wall. The city gates are made of *lapis lazuli* gems, and its rooms are made of gold. It abounds in horses, elephants and chariots, and flourish of trumpets is constantly heard. Its gardens are picturesque and contain a large number of trees of coveted fruits. Sita, if you live with me in Lanka, you will not long for human companions, and after enjoying heavenly and rare luxury, you will never think of Rama—a human being with a brief span of life. You see, king Dasaratha having banished his weak son has installed his dear one to the throne. Now what will you do with that stupid vagabond deprived of his kingdom? I am the lord of the Rakshasas, I have come to you personally, please receive me. I have been smitten with love, please save me. You must not refuse me. As Urvashi repented for kicking at Pururava, so you will have to rue for disappointing me. Janaki, Rama cannot stand even the force of a single finger of mine in battle. By your good luck I have come to you, so yield to me."

Hearing this Sita boldly replied with her eyes flashing in anger, "Claiming Kuvera as your brother, who is adored by all gods, how could you engage yourself in such a nefarious act? You are a sensuous brute, and they whose ruler you are will meet with their destruction. It is even possible to live for some time after carrying off the peerless beauty, Sachi, the queen of Indra, but it is impossible to live in safety by carrying off Rama's wife. Even if you be immortal by drinking nectar, you won't be saved."

CHAPTER XX

ABDUCTION OF SITA

Then powerful Ravana pressed his palms in anger and assumed his own form and addressing Sita said, "My beauty, you are mad, perhaps you have not heard about my prowess. I can bear the earth on my hands, can drink ocean, kill Death in battle and pierce the sun and the nether world with my sharp arrows. You are proud of your beauty and youth, now cast your glance at me who can assume any form at will."

As he spoke thus, his blue, fiery eyes became red with anger. He at once cast off the gentle mask of a mendicant and assumed his own fierce form, terrible as death. For some time he stood angrily staring at Sita adorned with a head of black hair and resplendent as sunlight, and said, "My noble lady, if you desire for a husband famous in the three worlds, then accept me. I am worthy of you in every respect. It will be a great honour to you if you serve me all your life. I shall never do you any harm. Leave aside your attachment for Rama and be devoted to me. Ah, foolish girl, seeming wise, how could you be attached to that stupid Rama with a brief span of life, who at the words of a woman, has come to this fearful forest in exile, leaving behind his kingdom, friends and relations?"

Thus spoke wicked and lustful Ravana. As the planet Budha attacks the star Rohini, so he pounced upon Sita of sweet speech. With his left hand he held her hair and with his right hand he clasped her thighs. The sylvan deities ran away in fear at the sight of Ravana, huge as a mountain.

Then came instantly the magic car drawn by asses with a deep rumbling noise. Ravana got upon the chariot with Sita in his embrace. Sita then in extreme distress called aloud for distant Rama and writhed like a snake to get out of Ravana's hand. But Ravana infuriated with lust soared with her in the sky.

Then Sita, crazed with grief and remorse, began to cry, "Ah, respectful Lakshmana, always obedient to the superiors, dost thou not see that sorcerer Rakshasa is carrying me away? Alas, Rama! Thou hast renounced thy happiness and wealth for virtue, dost thou not see that Rakshasa is carrying me off by force? O hero, you always chastise the wicked; why dost thou not teach this villain a lesson? Evil acts do not always bear their fruits in a moment's time, but slowly, like the ripening of the grain, they bring forth by degrees their harvest of woes. You have done this for your own ruin. Alas! The chaste wife of righteous Rama is thus being carried away. Now Kaikeyi's desire will be fulfilled.

'I invoke you, O Janasthana, and the blooming *Karnikars* to inform Rama without delay that Ravana has stolen away Sita. I ask you, O Godavari, resonant with the cries of swans and ducks, to inform Rama without delay that Ravana has carried off Sita. I invoke you all animals and creatures of the forest, to tell Rama that Ravana has carried off his darling wife. Even if I am carried away by death from this world, Rama will surely recover me by his prowess."

When Sita was thus lamenting bitterly, she beheld Jatayu, the prince of birds on the tree. At his sight, she piteously began, "O worshipful Jatayu, this vicious

Rakshasa is carrying me away in helpless condition. This wicked devil is cruel, haughty and powerful. Moreover he is armed. Do tell Rama and Lakshmana about it, so that they may learn everything."

CHAPTER XXI

FIGHT WITH JATAYU

At that time Jatayu was asleep but hearing these words his sleep was broken, and he beheld Ravana and Sita. Then that big bird with a huge sharp beak said, "Ravana, I am truthful and honest, I am Jatayu, the king of birds. Now, my brother, it is not proper for you to behave like this in my presence. Dasaratha's son Rama is the lord of all and he wishes good to everybody, and he is like Indra and Varuna. Whom you intend to carry away is the wife of Rama, honourable Sita. It is not at all proper for a virtuous king to touch another's wife, specially the wife of a king should always be carefully protected. Give up your low desire concerning another's wife. Another's wife should be protected like one's own wife from the (contaminating) touch of a third person. Wise men do not act in such a manner that other people can censure them. People follow the example of their king in the pursuit of religion, wealth, objects of desire and salvation. But lord of the Rakshasas, you are sinful, and I wonder how you could acquire such wealth. It is highly difficult to change one's nature, but royal splendour cannot long exist in a vicious man's glance. Ravana, Rama has not injured you in any way, then why do you commit such wrong to him?"

"In Janasthana-forest Khara and Dushana committed wrong on account of Surpanakha and for that Rama killed them in battle. Now tell me what he has really done? However, leave Sita without a moment's delay. As thunderbolt destroyed Vritra, that hero will reduce you to ashes by his angry look. You have unwittingly tied a deadly snake with the end of your cloth, and put a halter round your neck of which you are ignorant. One should carry only that weight that might not exhaust him, or should take only that which he can easily digest. It is not at all good to do such an act which is neither moral nor honourable, but only brings suffering in its wake.

"Ravana, I have been ruling over my ancestral kingdom for a long time. I am sixty thousand years old, and you are young, you are armed and is stationed in a chariot, yet you won't be able to run away with Janaki smoothly. As logical reasonings can not override the immemorial Vedas¹, so you won't be able to take away Sita from my presence. Just wait for a moment, and if you be a hero, be prepared for a fight. You will surely lie down in the battle-field like Khara, you will be soon killed by Rama, the vanquisher of the Danavas. The two princes have gone to the distant forest but if you see them, you will run away in fear. However, you will not succeed in carrying away Rama's darling wife so long I am alive. I shall stake my life for her. Wait a

1 Mark the passage. Amongst the Hindus the Vedas are always regarded to be the highest authority. In matters of religion preference is always given to intuitive truths over inferential knowledge.

moment ; I shall bring you down from your car, like a fruit down from its stalk. You will be duly received in fight according to my might."

Thereupon, Ravana adorned with gold ear-rings became restive with anger and rushed towards Jatayu with red hot eyes. Then the two warriors met like two clouds clashing against each other by the rush of wind in the sky, and a heavy fight ensued as if two winged hill were engaged in a duel ! Jatayu warded off all the blows of Ravana and began to tear Ravana's flesh with his beak and claws. Thereupon, Ravana in great rage discharged ten sharp arrows against Jatayu.

All the time, Janaki with tearful eyes was anxiously waiting for the issue of the fight. At this Jatayu without caring for his injuries rushed towards Ravana and broke his golden shafts and bow.

Ravana grew extremely angry at this and took up another bow and smothered him with arrows. Being beset with arrows, Jatayu looked like a bird nestled in a nest. Jatayu then spreading his wings on air attacked and broke the bright shining car of Ravana, and killed the charioteer striking him with his beak. Ravana then lighted on the ground with Janaki on his lap.

But Ravana was delighted seeing Jatayu tired on account of his age and he again ascended the chariot with Janaki. Seeing Ravana thus going away with Janaki in delight, Jatayu ran after him and obstructed his way saying, "Ah, you stupid, for the destruction of the Rakshasa race you are carrying away his wife whose arrows are deadly like thunderbolts. You are drinking poison with avidity like a thirsty man. Foolish people,

ignorant of the consequences of their acts, soon meet with their ruin like you. You have been ensnared by death, how can you escape? Can that fish escape which has swallowed the hook with a fleshy bait? Rama and Lakshmana are exceedingly powerful; they won't brook this trespass upon their hermitage. You are a veritable coward, and it is nothing but theft. This is not the way in which a brave man acts. Wait and if you be brave, be prepared for a fight. You will surely be killed like Khara. Those whose ends are nigh, commit such sinful acts. You are doing this for your own destruction. Ah Villain! Who wants to do that whose consequence is evil? Not even the Self-born, the lord of the three worlds, dare do a sinful act."

Saying this Jatayu swooped on Ravana's back as a rider mounts upon an infuriated elephant. Ravana was greatly tormented by the strikings of his beak. Ravana shook with anger and taking Janaki on the left side of his lap struck Jatayu with his fists. Jatayu thereupon tore off the ten left hands of Ravana, but instantly ten new arms sprang up in their place like venomous snakes emerging from an ant-hill. Ravana then left Sita and began to shower kicks and blows on Jatayu. A hard contest ensued, and Jatayu fought at the risk of his life for Rama. Ravana, however, hastily took up his sword and cut Jatayu's wings into pieces. Jatayu at once fell on the ground and was on the point of death.

Seeing Jatayu lying on the ground bathed in blood Janaki hastened towards him with a distressed heart like one that goes near a dying friend, and began to weep by his side.

Ravana was extremely delighted seeing that huge bird like a blue cloud, with yellow breast, fallen like an extinguished forest fire.

CHAPTER XXII

PLIGHT OF SITA

Then Janaki, with moon-like face, embracing Jatayu broke forth in tears, "Dreams, throbbings of limbs, cries of birds and animals are said to presage happiness and sorrow of man. Rama, for me birds and animals are rushing into danger, but you know not what great evil is impending on you. This Jatayu, the prince of birds, came forward to protect me out of compassion, but due to my ill luck lies dead on the ground."

Sita then in great fear began to speak, as if addressing one by her side, "Alas Rama! Alas Lakshmana! Save me to-day." Thus she began to weep like a forlorn creature. Ravana then again darted to capture her.

Sita then in fear clung round a tree, as a creeper twins round its trunk.

"Just leave it, leave it," repeating these words Ravana came near Sita, and Janaki cried aloud calling Rama. But Ravana, for his death, seized her by the hair.

At once great commotions were seen in Nature. Intense darkness enveloped everything. The sun grew dim and the wind ceased to blow. The Grand Sire of creation, Brahma, seeing this insult on Janaki said, "Perhaps we shall now succeed." The hermits of the Dandaka forest felt delighted at the prospect of Ravana's death, but they were pained to see with their own eyes Sita dragged by the hair.

Sita was ever crying for Rama and Lakshmana. Ravana, however, forcibly took her and soared into the sky. Then Sita of golden hue and clothed in amber robes shone like a lightning in the sky. And Ravana looked like a hill on fire on account of her cloth streaming in the air. At that time, the petals of red lotuses fragrant with the sweet odour of her body rained on Ravana's laps and her golden cloth streaming in the air shone like crimson clouds of the evening. Alas, the sweet countenance of Sita in Ravana's lap appeared sad like a lotus torn from its stalk, or like the pale moon coursing its way through a bank of dense, dark clouds. A sweet lily-like odour was coming out of her faultless face, endowed with a graceful forehead, lovely hair, beautiful nose, crimson lips, bright pearly teeth and expanded eyes. That beautiful face was bathed in tears, looked pallid, like the moon in daylight, without Rama. Janaki was of golden hue, and Ravana was dark blue to see and she appeared like a golden chain round an elephant's neck, and shone as lightning in the midst of dark clouds, and on account of the jingling sounds of her ornament, Ravana seemed to be a rumbling cloud. The flowers from her tresses fell on Ravana's lap and he then shone like the Sumeru peak girt by a cluster of stars.

After a short time the jewelled anklets, glittering as lightning, slipped from her feet, and her shining ornaments, bright as flame, one by one, dropped from the sky like a shower of glowing meteors! Her jewelled necklace, bright as moonshine, slipped from her breast and shone like the stream of the Ganges falling from the sky.

The birds clamoured on shaking boughs, fish and other aquatic animals starred in water, and the lotus faded in grief for the sorrow of Janaki. Even lions and tigers ran in anger under the shadow of Sita. The mountains with their peaks, like upraised arms, wailed with their fountains of tears.

Even the sun grew dim in sorrow. Ravana was carrying off Rama's Sita ; certainly all righteousness had come to an end, thus bemoaned all creatures. A sudden terror seized the young deer and the sylvan gods cast startled looks from their eyes, dim with fright, and shook in fear.

Janaki then anxiously looked down for friends again and again. Her dark hair hung in the air, and tears washed off her *Tilak*. She swooned for Rama and Lakshmana.

But cruel Ravana proceeded with her along the sky.

CHAPTER XXIII

SITA'S SPEECH

Sita finding Ravana carrying her off through the sky became extremely agitated. Her eyes were red with weeping and rage, and being distressed with sorrow she said pathetically :

"Don't you feel ashamed in carrying me thus like a thief finding me quite helpless and alone ? It is through fear that you decyed my husband to a great distance in the form of that magic deer. Alas ! 'you have also killed Jatayu, the friend who attempted to rescue me. Wonderful is indeed your might, but you are carrying me away (like a trophy) without obtaining me in war.

It is a heinous crime to carry away another's wife in a helpless state, and are you not ashamed of such a disgraceful act? You seem to be anxious for the reputation of a hero, but people will now condemn you for this evil deed. Fie on your heroic boasts, disgrace to your conduct, this will put a stigma on your line. What shall I do since you are running away with me? But wait for a moment and if those two princes meet you, you will not be saved even with your large host. As a bird cannot bear the slightest touch of fire, so you won't be able to bear their shafts. Now if you wish your good, just leave me, or my husband will destroy you in his anger. You are forcibly carrying me away for a nefarious end, but your desire will not be fulfilled. I shall not live long amongst the enemies in absence of my godly husband.

"Can't you understand what is good for you? A man acts in a perverse manner, when his end is nigh, and you are behaving like that. The moribund do not like their diets. Since you are undaunted when there is sufficient cause of fear, it seems that the noose of death is already round your neck. You will surely have visions of rivers of blood, golden trees with flowers of gold and leaves of blue gems, and *Salmali* tree with iron thorns and of a forest of sword-like leaves. You are taking poison in the form of incurring displeasure of Rama. You are indeed in the trap of death. He who has killed fourteen thousand Rakshasas with his shafts will surely kill you for carrying away his dear wife."

Sita thus said many hard things against Ravana but being overwhelmed with grief and fear she lamented

bitterly. Ravana, however, hied through the sky taking that distressed young beauty with him.

When Janaki found that there was nobody to save her, she saw five apes seated on a hill. She threw down her silken cloth of golden hue, her scarf and fine ornaments, thinking that they might inform Rama. But Ravana could not know anything of it on account of the speed of his flight.

As soon as those articles were thrown, the monkeys with their brownish yellow eyes looked up and saw large-eyed Sita weeping bitterly.

CHAPTER XXIV

SITA'S LOT

Ravana gradually crossed the Pampa and proceeded towards Lanka. He carried in senseless delight a deadly snake on his lap !

Wicked Ravana after crossing many hills, rivers, lakes and forests with the speed of a flying arrow, arrived at the shore of the sea, full of sharks, crocodiles and whales. At that time the billows of the ocean lashed themselves into eddies in sorrow, and fishes and snakes remained inert in water. Then the celestials talked amongst themselves that Ravana's doom was at hand.

Ravana with Sita then entered the great city of Lanka with its well-laid and spacious roads and people thronging at the city gate. And there, entering his palace, he placed distressed Sita as Maydanava kept the demoniac Maya.¹

¹ Magic or illusion here compared to a maid.

Placing Sita there, Ravana addressing the frightful Rakshasis said, "Let none, whether male or female, see Sita without my permission. Give her instantly whatever she likes, jewels, ornaments, gold or apparel. If anybody uses any harsh expression towards her, either wilfully or unwittingly, I shall surely put that person to death."

Formidable Ravana after giving these directions to the Rakshasis emerged out of his inner court and thought what to do next. At that time his eyes fell upon eight redoubtable, flesh-eating Rakshasas. Proud Ravana, seeing them, highly eulogised their valour and said, "Look here! Hie with your weapons to Janasthana where heroic Khara lived, but depopulated now. Live there fearlessly depending on your valour. There I stationed a large Rakshasa army, but all have been slain by Rama's shafts. Great hostility now exists between myself and Rama. I shall punish him afterwards and I shall not sleep till I destroy him. On his death I shall be as glad as a poor man feels happy on securing wealth. Now go and give me true informations about Rama. Proceed cautiously and try your best to kill him. In many a battle I have witnessed your valour, it is therefore that I send you thither."

Then those eight Rakshasas greeted Ravana and secretly left for Janasthana with that gratifying but difficult mandate.

Ravana too felt delighted by confining Sita within his palace.

After despatching those dreadful Rakshasas to Janasthana, Ravana, in his perverse wit, thought him as

crowned with success and he was smitten with lust at the constant thoughts of Sita. Thereupon he soon entered the inner court of his palace to see her.

On entering the apartment Ravana saw Sita surrounded by the Rakshasis, weighed down with sorrow and silently shedding tears with a downcast gaze. At that time she looked miserable like a sinking craft overtaken by storm in the sea, or like a doe hounded by the dogs that has been separated from the herd.

Ravana approached her and showed her against her will all the glories of his palace.

"These mansions and palaces," said Ravana, "are full of gems and they rest on crystal, gold, silver and ivory pillars, ornamented with diamond and lapis lazuli. The windows are made of ivory and silver, and are protected with golden nets. Their floors are smooth and white. Thousands of beauties and thousands of beautiful birds live there, and there are tanks and lakes strewn with lilies."

Then wicked Ravana ascended the magnificent palace with Sita as into a heavenly mansion through golden stairs resounding at every step like a deep rumbling drum, and pointed to her the beauties of his castle.

Then to incite cupidity and greed in Sita's mind, he said, "Janaki, besides the young and the old, I am ruler over thirty-two millions of Rakshasas, and thousands of them speed at my command. Ah, my darling! Thou art dearer to me than life. This life and my kingdom belong to you. I entreat you to be my wife. Be thou the queen over all the beauties that wait on me. Don't disagree. Janaki, please accede to my words. I

am being consumed with the fire of passion, have pity on me.

"Look this spacious Lanka, girt by the ocean, is inaccessible even to the gods and demons. There is none among the celestials, Yakshas, Gandharvas and Rishis who dare challenge me. My beauty, Rama is a puny creature, he is a man. He is weak and has been deprived of his kingdom, and has no conveyance but walks on foot. What will you do with such poor Rama? Fix your mind on me. I am worthy of you in every respect. Ah, my timid beauty! Youth is ever fleeting, enjoy yourself with me and banish all thoughts about seeing Rama. He can't come here even by riding on his thoughts. It is rather possible to chain the strong wind of heaven, or to catch hold of the glowing flames of fire! Janaki, I am your guard and I see none in the three worlds who can take you away by force. Now, rule over this extensive Lanka, and I shall be your slave. The gods and all the creatures of the world will serve you as servants. Take your bath, remove your langour and get ready for enjoying yourself. The sin that you might have committed has already been expiated by your exile in the forest, now enjoy the reward of your meritorious deeds. Here are beautiful garlands and fine ornaments, let us decorate ourselves with them. My brother Kuvera had a chariot called *Puspaka*. It is highly beautiful, bright like the sun and spacious, and it can travel with the speed in which thoughts can travel. I have procured it by my prowess. Just get upon it and let us go wherever you like. My darling, your face is lovely like a sweet lily, but it has been greatly tarnished with sorrow."

When Ravana said this, Sita covered her face with the end of her cloth and began to shed tears. She was weighed down with sorrow and deeply absorbed in anxious thoughts.

At this Ravana said, "Don't think of shame for this violation. The tie of love with which we two shall be united offends no morality. I do now touch your feet, be pleased with me. I am your obedient servant. Let not my prayer, prompted by ardent love, be in vain. Ravana hath never before lowered his head to any woman's feet."

Saying this, the lord of Lanka, under the spell of death, thought, "She is mine."

CHAPTER XXV

FACING THE LION

Then Sita oppressed with sorrow, placing a blade of grass between herself and Ravana, fearlessly said, "Hear me, Rakshasa! There was a famous king named Dasaratha. He was like a pillar¹ of virtue. Virtuous Rama is his son. He is an Ikshwaku prince. He is my husband and my worshipful deity. He is truthful, famous and possesses mighty arms and large eyes. He with heroic Lakshmana will put you to death. Had you attempted to overcome me by force in his presence, surely you would have been slain in battle like Khara. The grim Rakshasas mentioned by you will be harmless as venomous snakes before Garuda. His golden shafts will bring you down as the waves of the Ganges carry

¹ In the original it is "bridge."

off its banks. Thou mayst be incapable of being slain by the gods or the Asuras, but you won't be able to save yourself by incurring the enmity of Rama. That hero will kill you without doubt; you are doomed like an animal tied to a sacrificial stake. You will be reduced to ashes by the angry look of Rama, as Cupid was by the glance of Rudra. He who can bring down the moon from the sky and dry up the sea, will rescue Sita from this place. Ah, you villain, strength, glory and intelligence have left you, and for you Lanka will be a widowed city. Thou hast torn me from my husband's side, the end of this sinful act will never be good. Powerful Rama and Lakshmana will humble your pride. When one's end is nigh, he becomes careless about everything. That fateful time has arrived for you, and for this outrage done to me you will be destroyed with all your people. I am the devoted wife of Rama and thou shalt never be able to touch my person. A Chandala (outcaste) cannot touch the sacred sacrificial altar sanctified by mantras and decorated with wreaths. The consort of a swan that sports with her mate amidst lotuses—how can she favour with her glance a water-crow straying amongst weeds and bushes? This body is now useless to me, you may chain it, or destroy it. I shall not preserve it any more, nor will ever bear the stigma of unchastity."

Thus said Sita in great indignation and anger.

Hearing these words sufficient to make one's hair stand on their ends, he said threatening Sita, "Hear me, Sita, I shall wait for twelve months. If you do not be favourably inclined during this time, then my

cooks will cut you into pieces to serve with the morning meal.¹"

Then turning towards the grim Rakshasis, Ravana said, "Listen to me, Rakshasis, humble her pride immediately."

At these words, the Rakshasis surrounded Janaki. Ravana then proceeded a few paces shaking the earth by his heroic treads, then turning to them said, "Go, take Sita to the Asoka forest and guard her there carefully, and sometimes by fright and sometimes by solaces try to bring her gradually under your sway, just as a wild elephant is tamed."

Thereupon, the Rakshasis took Sita to the Asoka wood. There were a number of *Trees of Desire* bearing fruits and flowers, granting every prayer, and the place was resonant with the joyous notes of birds.

Thenceforth Janaki being surrounded by the Rakshasis passed her days as a doe in the midst of tigresses, and was distressed like a deer caught in a trap and knew not a moment's respite. Grim-visaged Rakshasis roared and intimidated her. She was overwhelmed with grief and fear and swooned in thinking of Rama and Lakshmana.

CHAPTER XXVI

RAMA'S RETURN

In the meantime Rama after slaying Maricha in the form of a deer proceeded towards the hermitage to meet

^{*} 1 This constant allusion to cannibalism is a set-off against the astounding material civilisation of Ravana.

Sita. At that time, jackals began to howl after him. Rama was greatly alarmed by their harrowing cries. "Certainly, something evil has happened since the jackals are crying so. Perhaps the rovers of might have devoured Janaki. Wicked Maricha surely intending some evil unto me cried in imitation of my voice. If Lakshmana heard that cry, he would come here leaving Sita alone, or if Sita heard it, then she would send him here. It is the ardent desire of the Rakshasas to kill Janaki. This was why Maricha assuming the form of a golden deer had decoyed me to such a distance and then cried out, "Alas, Lakshmana, I am dying." Since my fight at Janasthana I have incurred the hostility of the Rakshasas. We have left the cottage and I see evil portents on all sides. Heaven knows whether Sita is doing well or not."

At the howling of the jackals Rama became extremely anxious and with a distressed mind hastily proceeded towards the cottage. The birds and the animals that came near Rama at the time began to cry fearfully on his left. After a while Rama saw Lakshmana from a distance coming towards him. Both looked anxious and sad, and as soon as Rama met Lakshmana he reprimanded Lakshmana for leaving Sita alone in that dreadful forest, and taking Lakshmana's left hand in his palm broke forth with a sad but sweet voice, "Lakshmana, you have done a great wrong in coming here leaving Janaki alone. Heaven knows what dire calamity has befallen her. I see dark portents everywhere: surely Sita has been stolen or eaten up by the Rakshasas. Look the animals and the birds are crying in the left, so I can-

not by any means think that Janaki is safe. Maricha decoyed me to a long distance, I have killed him somehow, and he assumed the form of a Rakshasa at the time of death, yet my mind is sad and cheerless. My left eye is throbbing, it seems Sita is no more. Either somebody has taken her away, or she is dead, or she is wandering in distress."

Then Rama finding Lakshmana sad and distressed asked him, "My boy, she who has followed me to the Dandaka forest and whom you have left alone, where is that Janaki now? I have been deprived of my kingdom and am passing a nomadic life in the forest; now where is Janaki, my companion in sorrow? Without seeing whom I cannot live for a moment, where is that Janaki, my help-mate in life? I do not crave for heaven or ruling over the earth in absence of Janaki, of dainty waist, of golden hue, like a daughter of gods. Now tell me the truth whether my darling is alive or not? If I die for Sita, return to Ayodhya alone. Mother-Kaikeyi will be happy seeing the kingdom quite secured to her son and mother Kausalya, sad and saintly, will humbly wait upon them. Lakshmana, I shall enter the cottage if Sita is alive, or I shall give up my life, if she is dead. If she does not greet me with her smile, I shall die. Tell me whether she is alive or the Rakshasas have eaten her up through your carelessness? Alas! Janaki is too young and tender, she can't bear any pain. Surely, she has been greatly distressed by my absence. When wicked Maricha cried, 'Alas, Lakshmana!' were you alarmed by it? Perhaps Janaki, finding the voice like that of mine, sent you

through fear, therefore you have hastily come to see me. However, you have not acted right by leaving Sita alone in the forest. By this you have given opportunity to the cruel Rakshasas for doing evil. These carnivorous Rakshasas have been greatly mortified at Khara's death, so there is not the least doubt that they will kill Sita. Alas! I have fallen in great distress and I know not what to do, perhaps this was decreed in fact."

Rama thus being greatly distressed by anxious thoughts about Sita, hastily proceeded towards the cottage, taking Lakshmana to task. His countenance grew pale with hunger, thirst and fatigue. He was weighed down with sorrow and breathed heavily.

Rama again sorrowfully asked, "My boy, since in great confidence I kept Janaki under your charge, why did you leave her and come hither? I have been greatly alarmed seeing you coming here alone without Sita. My left eye and arm are throbbing incessantly and my heart is trembling ever." Lakshmana then mournfully replied to sorrowful Rama :

"Arya! I have not come hither leaving Sita of my free will. She despatched me with harsh words, therefore I have come to you. Janaki heard you crying aloud "Lakshmana, save me." Hearing that cry for your help, Janaki was greatly alarmed and, on account of her love for you, she with tearful eyes urged me again and again to come out. Then to assure her I said, "Worshipful lady, I do not see any Rakshasa that can frighten Rama. Be now comforted, this voice is not that of Arya, but of somebody else. Somebody for some

reason has imitated his voice. He can resist even against the gods, why should he utter this disgraceful cry, "Save me?" Don't be distressed like a common woman, banish your anxiety and be calm. None has yet been born, nor will any one in future in the three worlds, who can conquer Rama.

"Thereupon, Janaki wept and cruelly said, 'Ah, you wicked, you are thinking of winning me after Rama's death, but that desire of yours will never be fulfilled. You have certainly followed Rama as a spy of Bharata, hence you are not going to his rescue even hearing his cries. You are an enemy in disguise; it is, therefore, that you are seeking for an opportunity.'

"At these words of Janaki I was beside myself with rage; so I left the cottage without any further delay."

Hearing these words from Lakshmana's lips, Rama sorrowfully said, "Lakshmana, you have done wrong by coming here without Sita. You have not acted properly by coming out, disobeying my mandate at the angry words of Janaki, knowing that I can resist the Rakshasas. I am rather displeased with you. The Rakshasa that decoyed me in the form of a deer has been killed by my arrows. When he was struck by me, he assumed the form of a Rakshasa wearing bracelets and cried out in my voice. You have left Janaki hearing that cry."

CHAPTER XXVII

RAMA'S LAMENT

As Rama proceeded towards the cottage, he began to stumble on the way and shook in all his limbs. He saw

dark portents everywhere and repeatedly questioned Lakshmana about Sita's safety. He hastened towards the cottage being extremely anxious to meet her. Rama reached the cottage with Lakshmana, but found it desolate. He then entered the cottage and hied to the sporting ground of Sita, but there was no Sita. His hairs stood on their ends, and he was overwhelmed with anxiety. Tossing his arms up (in grief) he sought for her hither and thither.

The cottage without Sita looked like a tank in winter shorn of the beauty of the lotus. The trees seemed to be weeping, flowers were faded, and bereft of their glory, all beasts and birds were mute with sorrow. The cottage looked quite desolate and disturbed. Kusha grass, deerskins, and twigs of Kusha were scattered hither and thither, as if the sylvan deities left the place in hurry. Rama burst into bitter lamentations at the sight of that empty cottage.

"Has Janaki been carried away by somebody, or is she no more? Who has been satisfied with her blood? Has she concealed herself? Has she gone out for gathering fruits and flowers, or has she left for the stream to fetch water?"

Then Rama with eyes red (with weeping) and being mad with grief searched all possible places for Janaki but could not find her anywhere. He roamed through hills and forests and came on the banks of the rivers and streams, and approaching each object he questioned about Sita.

"O *Kadamva*, said he, "My darling is quite fond of you, tell me if thou hast seen her? Tell me, O *Bilwa*,

has thou seen her whose breasts are round like thy fruits, whose body is soft like tender sprouting leaves, and who was clad in a yellow silken cloth? O *Arjuna*, you were dear to slim Janaki, tell me now whether she is alive or not. O, *Maruvaka*, you look beautiful, being covered with leaves and flowers and being twined by creepers. You certainly know where is now Janaki, whose thighs are smooth as thy bark. O *Tilaka*, thou art the chief among trees, the bees hum round you, and thou art an object of Sita's affection; certainly thou knowest where she tarries now. O *Asoka*, you are the destroyer of grief.¹ I am senseless with grief for Sita, just remove my sorrows by pointing out Sita to me. O Palm, my darling's breast is like your ripe fruits, please tell me if thou hast seen her. Ah, O Rose-Apple, tell me if thou hast met that Sita of golden hue. O *Karinarkara*, being adorned with flowers you look quite beautiful to-day. Gentle Janaki is very fond of you, tell me if thou hast seen her."

Rama thus questioned every tree, such as mango, pomegranate, sandal, sal, *ketaka*, *kadamva*, *vakul*, *kurava*, and roamed through the forest mad with grief.

Rama then questioned the wild animals of the forest regarding Sita. Addressing the woodland fawn, Rama said, "Ah, Deer, surely thou knowest gazelle-eyed Sita. Is she now sporting with the does? O Elephant, she whose thighs are round like your trunk is no doubt known to you, tell me if thou hast seen her. O Tiger, the countenance of my darling is beautiful like the

* 1 *Soka* means grief, *Asoka*—without grief.

moon, now tell me without any hesitation if thou hast seen her anywhere.

"Ah, my lotus-eyed beauty, why dost thou fly away? Just now I have caught your sight! Why dost thou not reply to my words from behind the tree? Stop! Thou hast grown extremely unkind to me. You never mocked me before, then why dost thou slight me now? My love, I have recognised thee by the yellow silken cloth. Ah, you are running away fast. If thou hast any pity for me, please stop, don't go further."

"Alas! She is not Sita of winning smile. Certainly carnivorous Rakshasas have devoured her tearing up her her limbs, or she would not have neglected me thus in my grief. Ah, how lovely was Janaki's nose! How beautiful-were her teeth! And how tempting were those lips! That fair countenance, beautiful like the full moon, was in the jaws of the Rakshasas, and when she shrieked in agony the Rakshasas devoured her soft, fragrant neck adorned with golden chain. Her arms, soft as tender leaves and adorned with ornaments and that shook like tendrils, were eaten up by the Rakshasas. Alas! It is for the Rakshasas that I left young Sita! Alas! Although she had friends, yet she was helpless! Lakshmana, have you met my darling anywhere? Alas, My love! Alas, Sita! Where hast thou gone?"

Rama thus searched for Sita through the forest. Sometimes he ran fast, sometimes he whirled round and round, and became frantic with grief. Thus ceaselessly he paced to and fro through the forest. He could not give up his hope for Sita and he renewed the search with greater vigour.

CHAPTER XXVIII

OCEAN OF GRIEF

Rama long searched for Sita, but could not find her anywhere, and with upraised arms burst into bitter cries, "Brother Lakshmana, where is Sita? Where has she gone? Who has stolen her? Who has devoured her? My love, if you are bent upon playing jokes with me by hiding yourself behind the trees, please refrain from it. I have been greatly distressed by your absence, come quick to my side. The young fawns with whom you used to play are brooding over your absence with tearful eyes. Brother, I have Janaki no more. I shall not live in her absence. Father from heaven will surely see me die in grief for Sita, and he will say 'I am bound by pledge, then why hast thou come here before the expiry of the full term (of banishment)?' And for this fault he will surely take me to task for my meanness and wilful conduct. Janaki, I am weak, poor and absolutely under your sway. Where hast thou gone casting me aside, as fame leaves the deceitful? Don't leave me, my love, I shall then surely die."

Rama thus lamented bitterly but got no sight of Sita.

Then Lakshmana finding Rama immersed in grief and exhausted like a stork in deep mud, said in sweet consoling words, "O hero, do not be overwhelmed with grief. Let two of us now carefully search for her. Janaki loves to stray about in the woods of younder hill furnished with beautiful caves, perhaps she has gone there. Or, she has repaired to the lotus-strewn tank,

or to the river abounding in fish and its bank covered with canes, or to see how we search for her and to frighten us she has concealed herself somewhere. O worshipful one, don't be sad, let us now search the whole forest."

Then Rama with Lakshmana searched for Sita in the hill, in the valley, in the forest, near the rill, round the lake, but Sita was nowhere.

Rama then addressing Lakshmana said, "My boy, I have not found Sita in the hill."

Lakshmana sorrowfully returned, "As Vishnu rules the world by subduing Vali, so you will recover Sita straying through the Dandaka forest." Thereupon, Rama pathetically said, "My boy, I have sought for her in the forest, in the hill, in the cave, near the rill, near lotus-strewn pool, but couldn't find Janaki, dearer than life."

Rama then wept bitterly and became crazed with grief. A langour benumbed his limbs, and his understanding became clouded. He heaved long, hot sighs and cried out, "Alas, my love!"

Thereupon, Lakshmana with joined hands tried to console him by various means, but Rama paid no heed to his words and shed an ocean of tears.

Rama then being crazed with grief and love, seemed to behold Sita in his hallucination, and addressing her said, "My love, you are much fond of flowers, why hast thou then covered thyself with Asoka blossoms to incite my grief? Your thighs are well-shaped like the plantain tree and you have concealed them in the plantain grove, but I see them quite distinctly. Janaki,

just for joke you have concealed yourself in the *Karnika* grove, but what is sport to one, is death to another. Please refrain from it, it is not consistent with hermitage-life. I now fully realise that you are fond of jests. But come, my large-eyed love, the cottage is desolate without you.

“Lakshmana, perhaps the demons have stolen away Sita, or eaten her up, or she could not have forsaken me seeing me thus distressed. These deer with their tears confirm my suspicion. Alas, devoted Janaki, where hast thou gone? Kaikeyi's desire has been fulfilled. I came out with Sita, but how shall I return alone? People will think me weak and cruel. Janaki's death proves that I have not the least prowess. On my return from the forest when King Janaka will come to enquire after our welfare, how shall I meet him? He will certainly be mortified with grief for not seeing my Sita. Happy is father, for he had not to suffer this sorrow. Now tell me, brother, how shall I return to Ayódhya ruled by Bharata? I shall not be happy even in heaven without Sita. I shan't be able to live anyhow without Sita, so go back leaving me in the forest, and after embracing Bharata tell him that I have given him permission to rule over the kingdom. After saying this to Bharata, convey my greeting to Kaikeyi, Sumitra and Kausalya in order. I know you never neglect my words. Relate at length about the destruction of Janaki to my mother, and just help her to bear the sorrow.”

Lakshmana was greatly pained at these lamentations of Rama, his face grew pale and he was extremely distressed in mind.

Rama was overwhelmed with grief and finding Lakshmana stricken with sorrow heaved a deep, hot sigh and said with tears, "My boy, perhaps there is not a greater sinner than myself on earth. Misfortunes after misfortunes crush my heart and soul. Formerly, I committed many sins through my wayward will, therefore I am reaping the harvest of sorrow now one after another. I have been deprived of kingdom, friends and mother. It is for me that father died. All these recollections crowd in my mind and fill my heart with grief. Brother, I forgot every sorrow by coming into the forest with Janaki, but her separation like fire has rekindled them again.

"Alas, when the Rakshasas carried her off, how piteously she shrieked in fear and how bitterly she wept. Her white round breast, perfumed with yellow sandal paste, was surely bathed in blood. But, alas, I am not dead yet. The countenance over which waved her curling hair, from which ever emitted clear, silvery scents, has certainly been shorn of its beauty like the moon under the grip of Rahu. Perhaps the blood-thirsty Rakshasas have torn into pieces the sweet neck of my darling adorned with gold chain. I was absent from the cottage and during that time they dragged her by force and she cried like a distressed doe.

"Ah, how liberal and sweet she was. At the foot of this hill sitting by me, how smilingly she talked to me! Let us now search for her. She has gone to the Godavari, the best of the streams, for she loved it most, or that lotus-eyed beauty has gone to some pool to gather lotuses, or has entered some blossoming wood resonant with the notes of birds.

"Alas, this is not to be, she won't go anywhere alone out of fear.

"O sun, you see all acts of men, you are witness to all truth and falsehood, now tell me where my darling has gone? O wind, you have free access everywhere and are aware of everything of the three worlds, tell me whether Sita, the glory of her race, is dead or alive? Or, somebody has stolen her? Have you seen her on any path?"

Then heroic Lakshmana seeing Rama thus stupefied with grief said, "*Arya*, banish your despair, let us be up and doing in her search. Energetic people are never borne down by arduous task."

Rama did not pay any heed to the valiant words of Lakshmana, but was cast down with sorrow.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE WRATH OF RAMA

Rama addressing Lakshmana entreatingly said, "Go quick to the Godavari and ascertain whether Janaki has gone there to gather the water-lilies."

Being thus addressed by Rama, Lakshmana went to the fair stream Godavari, reconnoitering everything about it. After a short time he came back and said, "*Arya*, I did not find worshipful Sita in any bathing place of the Godavari. I called aloud, but none answered my call. I know not where is that sweet lady, the destroyer of all sorrows."

* Rama then himself went to the Godavari and questioned everything near him about Janaki, but none dared disclose the fact that Ravana had stolen away

Sita. Rama then being frantic with grief again and again asked the river, the beasts and the birds, but the Godavari made no reply, she was greatly frightened thinking of terrible Ravana.

Rama then in despair told Lakshmana, "My boy, the Godavari does not say anything about Sita. Now what shall I say to king Janaka and how shall I speak of this loss of Janaki to mother? Janaki assuaged all my sorrows of exile, but where is she gone now? In absence of Sita, the nights will surely appear too long to me for want of sleep. If there is any chance of getting Sita, I shall roam through the whole of Janasthana and the valley of the Mandakini. Lo, the deer are casting their glances repeatedly on me, as if they have something to speak to me."

Then turning to the deer, Rama asked with a voice choked with tears, "Tell me, ye deer, where is Janaki?" Being thus addressed by Rama, the deer stood up, went towards the south along the route through which Sita had been taken away, and as they proceeded, they again and again looked up at the sky and again and again looked on Rama.

Lakshmana noticed their behaviour and read their silent signals, supplying the place of speech. He then said to Rama, "O worshipful lord, when you questioned the deer about Janaki, they stood up and pointed towards the south, let us proceed in that direction, we may perchance find Janaki there, or some mementos of her."

Rama agreed to Lakshmana's proposal and instantly proceeded with him towards the south, surveying all

round him carefully, talking of Janaki on their way. When they were going they came across a bunch of flowers lying on the road-side. At that heroic Rama said to Lakshmana, "Brother, I gave these flowers to Janaki and which she put on in her tresses. I recognise these to be the same. Perhaps the sun, the wind and the earth have preserved them for my benefit."

Rama then turning to a mountain rill said, "O rill. I have lost my Janaki. Hast thou seen that beautiful damsel in this romantic forest?"

A moment after, turning to the mountain as a lion roars against an humble animal, Rama broke forth in wrath, "Point out to me that damsel of golden limbs and of golden hue or I shall break down your peaks."

But the mountain showed no Janaki, and Rama angrily said, "O hill. I shall reduce you to ashes with all the trees and creepers by my arrows, and none will visit those barren heaps." Then turning to the rill he said, "If the stream does not speak about my moon-like beauty, I shall dry her up."

Thus while Rama spoke to Lakshmana, as if through his anger he would scorch everything with the fire of his eyes, he saw huge foot-prints of the Rakshasas on the ground. He also saw the foot-prints of Sita as she ran to and fro being chased by the Rakshasas. At a little distance he also found a broken bow, broken quivers, and a broken chariot.

At that sight Rama with great excitement said, "Behold Janaki's ornaments are strewn on the ground. There lies her beautiful necklace. Look, the ground is covered with drops of blood, like the spray of liquid

gold. Surely the rovers of night have devoured her. Here occurred a fierce fight between two giants for her. Look, there lies snapped, a beautiful bow, inlaid with pearls and gems. There lies a shattered golden armour, resplendent as the newly risen sun, adorned with lazulite studs. There lies a broken staff-umbrella with hundred ribs and decked with wreaths. Lo, what large asses with hideous faces and adorned with golden harness have been killed. What a shining flag-staff, bright as flame ! The battle car is broken and lies upside down.

"What formidable arrows with long, large blades ! There lies the charioteer dead, holding the reins and whip in his hands ! Whose are these, my boy ? Do they belong to the gods or to the demons ? The foot-prints are of a male person, these must be of a rover of night. I have deadly enmity with these cruel villains. They have now either stolen Janaki or eaten her up. Alas ! Righteousness could not protect Sita in the forest and the gods were unkind to me.

"My boy, people set at naught Him who is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer of the world, in spite of His compassion and mercy. Likewise the gods finding me gentle and generous have deemed me weak. My virtues have turned into faults. But henceforth you will behold my change. As the Doomsday-sun rises with fierce glare, so my valour will manifest itself for the destruction of all creatures. It will not be a happy day for the Yakshas, the Rakshasas, the Pishachas, the Kinnaras, or men. I shall overcast the sky with my arrows and smother all and render them quite inert. I will stop the courses of the planets, scree the moon, rob the sun and fire of their glare and cover the world with dark-

ness. I will crush mountains, dry oceans, and destroy all vegetation. If the gods do not return to me Sita, now dead or alive, I will destroy the creation in my wrath. Everybody will presently experience my valour. I will destroy the three worlds with all the Demons, Rakshasas and Pishachas in them."

Saying this Rama tightened the bark round his loins and gathered his matted lock. His eyes became red with anger, his lips began to quiver. He looked like Rudra about to slay the demon Tripura.

He took up the bow from Lakshmana's hand and by fixing flaming deadly arrows burned in rage like a kindled flame. "Lakshmana," said he, "As none can resist rage, death, time and accidents, so none will be able to withstand my rage."

Rama like the Doomsday-fire was about to destroy the creation, and breathing heavily he looked at the stringed bow.

Before this, Lakshmana had not seen such a change in Rama. Seeing Rama beside himself with rage, Lakshmana with folded hands and dried up countenance said, "Arya, formerly you were gentle, free from evil intentions and engaged in doing good to others, and it is not becoming of a man like you to renounce your nature. Eternal fame waits on you, as beauty is inseparable from the moon, light from the sun, motion from the wind and forgiveness from the earth. Therefore, it is not proper for you to destroy others for one's crime.

"There lies broken a well-equipped battle-car. I can infer why it is broken. The ground also is rent by the hoofs of the horses and covered with drops of blood. A

fierce fight seemed to have taken at this place. This fight was with one warrior, and not with many. I do not find the foot-prints of an army here. So it is not proper to destroy the world for one's crime. Kings, that are just, mete out punishment proportionate to the crime. "Arya, you are the shelter and guide of all. Who will approve this outrage on your wife? As the *Ritwiga* priests cannot do any harm to those who have been initiated by them, so the gods, the Gandharvas, the demons, the hills, the rivers won't be able to do anything unpleasant to you. Now, taking the bow in your hand search for the abductor of your wife with me and the hermits. So long we do not find her, we shall vigilantly search hills, forests, streams, caves, lakes, seas, and the land of the gods and and the Gandharvas. If the gods do not return your wife peacefully, then do what you consider best. If you do not get back your Janaki by truce, by virtue of your good conduct, morality and modesty, then destroy everything by your gold-feathered arrow resembling the thunderbolt."

CHAPTER XXX

RAMA PACIFIED

Rama, at this, being smitten with grief, began to weep like a helpless creature. Lakshmana then entreated him by the feet and for consoling him said, "O, worshipful lord, as the gods obtained nectar, so king Dasaratha got you after great penance and sacrifice. I have heard from Bharata that father died for you. If you be nervous and so distressed, then patience cannot be expected of ordinary people. Please compose your-

self. Who is not visited by misfortune? It burns one like fire, but is soon extinguished. In short, this is the destiny of every corporal being and it must be admitted that this is ordained by Heaven. You see, king Yayati first went to heaven, but subsequently he fell from it. The priest of our family, Vasistha, had hundred sons but he lost them in one day. She who is the mother of all, and is adored of all, that mother Earth quakes at times, and those that are the images of righteousness, and the eyes of the world, themselves suffer from eclipse. In short, mighty creatures and gods also have to suffer misfortunes. It is said that even Indra and other gods are subject to pleasure and pain. So do not be overwhelmed. Even if Janaki be dead, you should not lament like an ordinary man. Those who are wise like you and can see everything and coolly ascertain the cause, bear patiently even in great distress. Do thou, therefore, decide your course of action by your reason. Intelligent people can apprehend what is good and what is evil. Hardly any happiness ensues from the performance of such acts that are of uncertain issue, and whose nature is unknown. O hero, it is you who gave me all such counsels before. Who will presume to advise you? Even Vrihaspati is incapable of that. Even the gods cannot measure thy intelligence which is now clouded in sorrow. You possess both natural and super-natural powers, now by marshalling them get ready for the destruction of your enemy. What necessity is there for destroying all, destroy him who is the real enemy."

Rama who could easily grasp the pith of everything, agreed to Lakshmana's reasonable proposal. He subdued

his rage and said to Lakshmana, "Tell me, brother, what shall we do now? Where shall we go? Just think of the means by which we can find out Janaki."

Lakshmana replied, "*Arya*, this is Janasthana. The place is full of Rakshasas and covered with trees and creepers. Here are hill-fortresses, cleft rocks and caves full of wild animals. The Kinnaras and the Gandharvas live here. Let us carefully search the place. In calamities, a man like you should remain unmoved like a hill undisturbed by the course of wind."

Then Rama with Lakshmana began to search for Sita. At one place he found Jatayu lying in a pool of blood. At that sight Rama exclaimed, "My boy, this wretch has devoured my Janaki. Surely, it is a Rakshasa, roaming in the forest in the form of a bird. He is now taking rest after devouring Sita. I shall kill him immediately with my sharp arrow."

Saying this Rama angrily fixed a deadly shaft to his bow, as if shaking the earth and the sea by his angry treads.

When Rama came near, Jatayu vomiting frothy blood piteously said, "Ah hero, may you live long! Whom you are searching in the forest like the medicinal herb that may restore life has been robbed by mighty Ravana along with my life. She was defenceless and at that opportunity that wicked villain carried her off by force. When he saw that I had come forward for her protection, he threw me down on the ground. These are his bow, quivers, umbrella, car, which I broke down by my kicks, and killed the charioteer by striking him with my claws. But when I became exhausted, he cut

off my wings and carried away Sita through the sky. I have been already wounded by the Rakshasa, so spare me now."

When Rama got this information of Sita from Jatayu, his grief was doubly increased, and throwing aside his bow and arrow he embraced Jatayu rolling on the earth and began to weep. Then Lakshmana fell prostrate by the side of a thorny path and began to shed tears with deep long sighs. Rama was pained at that sight and softly began, "My boy, loss of kingdom, exile in the forest, loss of Sita and death of Jatayu are the decrees of Fate. To speak the truth my bad luck can even burn fire itself. If I enter the ocean, through my bad luck it will become dry. Perhaps there is not a more unlucky man in the world than myself. It is due to my ill luck that father is dead.

Saying this Rama with filial affection began to touch Jatayu's body and embracing him said, "Tell me, where is my Janaki?" And thus saying he fell upon the earth.

CHATER XXXI

DEATH OF JATAYU

Then Rama, darling of the people, said, "Lakshmana, this king of the birds¹ has died for my work. His voice has grown faint, his end is nigh and he is staring with dim, blank eyes. O Jatayu, if you have any

¹ Bird he cannot be. Was there any tribe known as the *Vihangas* (bird)? Perhaps they got this appellation for decorating their bodies with feathers, as are seen among the Red Indians. Apparently some of the non-Aryan tribes of India were described as serpents, etc. as the *Nagas*.

more power of speech, tell me how have you met with this fate? What harm have I done to Ravana? Why has he stolen my Sita? What did Janaki say? How mighty is Ravana? How he looks? What he does and where does he live?"

Then pious Jatayu replied, "My boy, wicked Ravana, creating storm and darkness by magic, carried off Sita through the sky. When I grew greatly exhausted in the fight, he clipped my wings and flew to the south. O Rama, the breath of my life is about to flee. I see before me trees of gold having hair resembling the Ushir grass. The moment, when Ravana carried away Sita is called *Vindya*. Whoever takes away anything (dishonestly) on this moment soon meets with his destruction like a fish devouring a hook, and the owner in no time gets back his lost property. But Ravana could not know this at that time. So don't be overwhelmed with grief for Sita. You will soon recover her."

When dying Jatayu was saying this, he began to vomit blood with particles of mucus.

"Son of Visvasrava, brother of Kuvera," he said but his voice was choked.

"Speak, speak," cried Rama in great excitement with folded hands, but Jatayu expired that very moment. His head rolled on the dust and he lay prostrate on the ground.

When copper-eyed Jatayu, huge as a mountain, died, Rama broke forth in deep sorrow, "Lakshmana, one who lived for a long time in the Dandaka forest infested by the Rakshasas, who was quite energetic inspite of his great age, is now lying dead. How inexorable is Death.

This helpful king of the birds has met with death for rescuing Sita. He has died only for me, casting aside his vast ancestral territory. Virtuous persons are among all castes and people; even amongst the birds are found some honest ones giving shelter to the distressed seeking protection. I have been greatly pained. He is adorable to me like king Dasaratha. Now gather woods for his cremation, I shall myself set fire to the funeral pyre of him who has died for me. O fatherly Jatayu, may you attain that high region that is reached by the heroes who are not afraid of entering the field of battle, that is attained by the giver of lands, by the performers of sacrifices and by those who keep sacred fire always alive¹ in the family. Ah, hero, I am myself setting fire to the pyre, may you attain excellent regions hereafter."

Saying this Rama placed Jatayu on the funeral pyre as one would do to his kinsman.

Then with Lakshmana, Rama entered the forest, slaughtered some deer and taking off their meat he offered *pindas* to Jatayu and fed the birds with them by placing them on soft turfs. Then Rama recited those *mantrams* that are done by the Brahmans for the attainment of heaven by the dead. He then went to the Godavari with Lakshmana and after bathing in the stream performed in due form the watery rites in honour of the dead. Jatayu met with death at the hands of the Rakshasa after achieving an arduous and glorious deed, and being cremated by saintly Rama he attained heavenly bliss.

1 Something like fire-worship as found in the Zoroastrian creed.

After this Rama and Lakshmana armed with bows, quivers and swords set out in quest of Janaki and proceeded towards the south-west direction.

CHAPTER XXXII

KAVANDHA

They proceeded through a dense dreary forest covered with trees and creepers and unvisited by man. They hurriedly passed through it and entered deep and inaccessible Krauncha forest six miles from Janasthana. It was dark like a deep blue cloud and full of wild animals and birds, and there were flowers of various bright colours. Issuing from the Krauncha forest, after a distance of six miles, they arrived at the dreadful abode of elephants. There the woods grew very dense and it abounded with ferocious animals. There they saw a deep cave like a fathomless abyss. On coming near the cave they espied a loathsome and hedious Rakshashi whose sight was enough to terrify the weak. She was tall, her belly hanging, teeth sharp, hair dishevelled and skin rough. She eschewing a piece of flesh came near them and embraced Lakshmana ahead of the two saying, "Come, let us dally in amorous sports. My name is Ayomukhee. You are my dear lover. I am also like a gem to you. Come, my lord, live with me happily for ever in these mountain fastnesses and on the banks of the stream."

Lakshmana was greatly enraged at this and cut off her nose, ears and breast. The Rakshashi fled away uttering terrible yells in agony.

Thereafter, they proceeded courageously to a dense forest. Then gentle Lakshmana with joined hands

respectfully said to Rama, "My arms are throbbing intensely, a great anxiety weighs upon my mind. I see evil portents around me. Please be on guard, do not neglect my words. I apprehend some danger from these evil omens. But from the cries of the fearful Banyulaka bird, I think that some evil will attend upon us soon."

As the two brothers were looking for Sita, they heard a terrific sound. The whole forest seemed to be panic-stricken at that. Thereupon Rama instantly took up his sword and proceeded carefully to ascertain its cause. In front of them they found a formidable Rakshasa, with a very spacious chest having no head or neck. His mouth was set on his belly, and there was only one eye on his brow. With long lashes, yellow in colour, it was dreadful and burning like a flame of fire. He was dark like a cloud and huge as a hill, with arms long as a league. His body was covered with bristling hair, and his tongue was protruding through his enormous teeth. With terrible roar like a thundering cloud he was feasting upon fierce lions, tigers, bears and other wild animals and birds.

That formidable Rakshasa, seeing Rama and Lakshmana, obstructed their way. Then they stepped aside and began to survey him.

Then the Rakshasa stretching his hands got hold of the two brothers and began to crush them with his might. They were being forcibly dragged. Heroic Rama, patient by nature, was not least affected by it, but Lakshmana was greatly distressed and sorrowfully said to Rama, "Lo! I am being overpowered by the Rakshasa, now run away by offering me as victim. You

will perhaps soon get back Janaki and when you get back your kingdom, just remember me occasionally."

Rama answered, "My brave brother, don't be frightened for nothing. A man like you is never overwhelmed by danger."

Then that cruel Kavandha said, "Who are you? With your bows and swords and with broad shoulders you look like bulls with sharp horns. Tell me, what business you have come here for? You have quite accidentally come within my sight. I am hungry, so there is no escape for you."

Rama at this said to terrified Lakshmana, "We are suffering misfortune after misfortune, but now we are in the peril of our life. Fate is quite inexorable, and nothing is impossible in the decree of fate. We too are now borne down by disaster. Even the heroes sometimes give way in fight like bridges of sand."

Having said this Rama stood there in calm courage.

Kavandha then encircling Rama and Lakshmana by the arm asked, "Ah Kshatriya boys, are you standing here seeing me hungry? Ah foolish chaps, fate has sent you as my food."

Then Lakshmana to display his valour told Rama, "Arya, this low Rakshasa will soon seize us. Let us now without delay cut off his two huge arms with sword. I see his strength lies in his arms. It is ignominious for a Kshatriya to kill one who cannot use arms and hence defenceless like an animal brought for sacrifice. We should not, therefore, put an end to the life of this Rakshasa."

Hearing these words Kavandha flew into rage. He

opened his mouth and tried to devour them. At that moment Rama cut off his right arm and Lakshmana his left. Kavandha fell down by uttering a terrific yell. He asked who they were. Thereupon Lakshmana said, "O Rakshasa, he is heroic Rama of the Ikshwaku line, and I am his younger brother. Mother stood in the way of his installation to the throne and sent him to exile. This is why god-like mighty Rama is residing in the forest with me and his wife. In this state when he was absent a Rakshasa has carried off his wife. We are out in search of her. Now tell me who are you with your flaming mouth set in the chest. Why do you roam about as a headless monster?"

Kavandha then remembered the words of Indra and then cheerfully welcoming them said, "O hero, fortunately I have met you, fortunately my arms have been cut, let me now tell how through my insolence I have undergone this hideous metamorphosis.

Rama, I was beautiful like Indra and like the sun and the moon, but I used to frighten the *Rishis* by assuming the form of a formidable Rakshasa. Once upon a time a hermit, named Sthulashira, was gathering wild fruits and roots. I snatched these from him, assuming this form. At this the *Rishi* was greatly enraged and he cursed me saying that henceforth I would be as cruel and hideous as the assumed guise.

"Then I entreated him again and again for the expiation of that curse. Then the *Rishi* said, 'When Rama will cut off your arm and burn you in the forest, you will get back your former beautiful form.'

*"Lakshmana, I am Danu, the son of Sri Danava.

The form that you see is due to the curse of Indra. Once I performed great penance, thereupon Grand Sire Brahma granted me long life as a boon, and I grew proud in consequence of that. I thought since I was to live long, Indra could do nothing to me. Being eleted with this thought, I challenged Indra in a fight. Indra with his thunderbolt pressed inside my body my head and thighs. I prayed humbly for life, so he did not kill me and said, 'Let Brahma's wish be fulfilled.' I then said, 'You have shattered my thighs and head by the thunderbolt, how am I to live henceforward?' Indra then set two long arms and a mouth with sharp teeth in my veily. I seize wild animals with my long arms and eat them. Indra at that time said that when in a fight Rama and Lakshmana would cut off your two arms, you would then attain heaven.

"Arya, I used to take everything that I could seize with my hands. I thought that once Rama and Lakshmana would come within my clutch and they would destroy my body. O hero, thou art that Rama. May good betide you. Sthulashira told me that none but Rama would be able to destroy me and that : as come to be true. Now set fire to my body, I shall give you good advice and show you a helping friend."

Rama then said, "Kavandha, I was out with Lakshmana in Janasthana and during our absence Ravana has stolen away my chaste wife Sita. I have only come to know the name of that wicked villain but I do not know anything about his residence, age, prowess or how he looks. We are now roaming about in a helpless state, please do us some favour. O hero, we shall dig a big

hole here and burn your corpse by collecting dry wood broken by the trunks of the elephants. Tell me who has carried away my Sita. If you know the truth, do me the favour by stating it."

Thereupon Kavandha answered, 'Prince, I don't know Janaki, I have not that supernatural power of knowledge now. I shall resume my former shape after death and shall then tell you who knows about her. I have lost that divine foresight on account of my curse, so before I am reduced to ashes, I won't be able to know which formidable Rakshasa has carried off your wife. So you first duly cremate my body before the sun goes down. I shall then name to you a person who knows everything about the Rakshasas. Make friendship with him. He is just, and you will get great help from him in your present circumstances. There is nothing unknown to him in the three worlds. Once upon a time for some reason he actually travelled through the three worlds."

Then a funeral pyre was prepared in a hollow of the hill. Lakshmana set fire to it and fire began to burn that huge fatty body like a lump of butter.

After a while Kavandha cheerfully rose from the flame. He was clad in a white piece of cloth, his body was decked with beautiful ornaments and an excellent garland hung from his neck. He got upon an effulgent car yoked with swans and ascending the sky said :

"Rama, listen to me as to how you will get back Sita. On earth there are only six ways of attaining one's object as peace and war.¹ One who is in distress should

¹ The six political means of attaining object :—*Santhi*—peace ; *Vigraha*—war ; *Yan*—military expedition ; *Ashana*—halting ;

mix with another like him. Now with Lakshmana you are in distress and have been suffering from the loss of your wife. So in these circumstances make friendship with one who is equally distressed like you. Besides this, I do not see any other means of your attaining success.

"Rama, there is a mighty monkey named Sugriva. He was begotten by the sun unto the wife of Riksharaja. Vali, the son of Indra, is his brother. He has driven off Sugriva from the kingdom. He is now dwelling on the Rishyamukha hill on the bank of the Pampa along with four other monkeys. He is modest, intelligent, gentle, capable, effulgent and of firm determination. He will be a friend and help to you in your quest for Sita. Don't be overwhelmed with grief. Fate is inexorable; what is to be, must be. So leave this place quickly. To avoid all evil, immediately contract friendship in the presence of sacred fire. Don't despise him because he is a *Vanara*. He is grateful, helping and capable of assuming different forms at will. You will get great help from him, or at least he will never be indifferent to your work. He now roams near the bank of the Pampa in fear of Vali who has driven him away.

"Rama, go now and placing thy weapons in the presence of attesting fire in solemn truth, contract friendship with that denizen of the forest. He knows everything about the Rakshasas and nothing of the three worlds is unknown to him. So long the sun shines, he will search for Sita at every possible place, hills, dales, caves and streams with his *Vanara* followers. He will send great *Vanara* chiefs in different directions and search for Sita in Ravana's palace, bewailing for you. Whether Janaki be on the peak of the Sumeru or in the nether region under the earth, this lord of the *Vanaras* will kill that villain and give back your Sita to you."

Daidhibhava—sowing dissension among the enemies; *Samashraya*—seeking protection.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FURTHER DIRECTIONS

After telling Rama the means of finding out Sita the Kavandha gave directions about the route saying,— Rama, this is the best path that leads to the place abounding in rose-apples, mangoes, figs, Jakas, Tridukas, Karnikaras, blue Asokas, red Sandals, Kadamvas, Tilakas Karavirs, Naktamals, Nagkesharas, Agnimukhyas and Mandar trees. Eat their sweet delicious fruits either by climbing upon the trees or by bending their boughs. After passing through that wood you will reach another forest like the heavenly garden Nandan. All the seasons exist there as in Chattraratha—the garden of Kuvera.

Thus passing through hills and dales you will arrive at the bank of the Pampa lake. It is free from gravel and weeds, is strewn with sands, so not at all slippery. It is resonant with the notes of aquatic birds and swans. They are not afraid of man, since they do not know anything like slaughter. You feed upon those fatty birds plump as a lump of butter. There are excellent fishes in that lake as Rohit and Chakratandu. Devoted Lakshmana will kill them with shafts and after removing their scales and fins will roast them for you. The water of the Pampa is clear like crystal, sweet, scented with the fragrance of lotuses and very pleasant to drink. Lakshmana will fetch it for your drink in cups made of lotus-leaf. Huge boars live there in mountain-caves and they bellow like bulls after quenching their thirst. Rama, you will feel consoled at the sight of the Pampa. Tilakas, Naktamals, red and white lotuses bloom there.

There is none to gather those flowers. Those flowers never wither. It was the residence of the disciples of Matanga. Drops of perspiration fallen from them while collecting fruits for their preceptor have bloomed into flowers. They are now dead, but still there lives a pious nun named Savari. This pious woman was their servant. You are divine, adorable of all. Savari will attain heaven at your sight.

"Rama, you will find the hermitage of Matanga on the west bank of the Pampa. Wild elephants do not dare to cross the threshold of his asylum. You will feel happy in that romantic place. The Rishyamukha hill is at a little distance from the Pampa. It abounds in various kinds of flower-trees, and being surrounded by young snakes nobody dares to cull flowers from them. The hill was formerly created by Brahma. Wonderful is its power of gift. Whatever riches one may seem to get in his dream sleeping over this mountain, on his awaking from sleep he finds actually possessing them. If any sinful person climbs upon it, the Rakshasas beat him instantly. The noise of the young elephants sporting in the Pampa is constantly heard in that hill. Tigers, bears and gentle Rurus of sapphire hue are found there. There is an immense cave in that hill. It is very difficult to enter it; you will find a beautiful tank in front of that cave. Its banks are adorned with various kinds of fruits and flower-trees. Pious Sugriva with other Vanaras live there, and sometimes resides on the peak of the hill."

Under the sky Kavandha with a bright garland shone like a sun and as he was about to ascend, Rama and Lakshmana said, "Go to the blissful heaven."

Kavandha replied, "Go to your own business and make friendship with Sugriva."

CHAPTER XXXIV

SAVARI

Rama and Lakshmana then followed the route indicated by Kavandha for meeting Sugriva.

They proceeded towards the west and found various trees heavy with sweet fruits on the hill. The sun set on their way and they passed the night on the hill. On the morning they arrived at the western bank of the Pampa. There was situated the romantic hermitage of pious Savari covered with various trees.

Seeing that, they approached Savari. As soon as that pious nun saw them, she stood up with folded hands. She with great reverence bowed to them and with due rites offered them water to wash their feet.

Rama then addressing Savari said, "O venerable lady of sweet speech, have you conquered all the obstacles that stand in the way of penance? Are you not progressing in your ascetic rites? Have you subdued your anger? Don't you practise control over food? How do you enjoy mental felicity? Are not all rules duly observed? Has thy service towards the superiors been consummated with success?"

Then aged Savari of accomplished penance, approved by the Siddhas, came forward and said :

"Rama, seeing you to-day I feel that my penance has attained its consumation, blessed is my birth and successful is my devotion to superiors. I shall attain heaven by worshipping you to-day. Since you have sanctified me by your gentle look, I shall surely attain eternal heaven by your grace. All the ascetics whom I used to serve have repaired in excellent chariots from

their hermitages to the heavenly region as soon as you set your foot on the Chitrakuta hill. Those virtuous ascetics at the time of their departure told me that Rama would one day come to this sacred asylum, and asked me to receive Rama and Lakshmana with due rites of hospitality.

"Rama, following those words of the hermits I have brought fruits and flowers for you from the bank of the Pampa."

Thereupon, Rama said to Savari, cognizant of the past, present and future, "I have heard from Danu about the glory of the ascetics. I wish to witness, with my own eyes, your attainment of that heavenly bliss."

Savari then said, "Rama, look, there the vast Matanga forest, full of beasts and birds, deep as a dense cloud. In this forest the holy hermits cast off their sacred bodies into burning flame by uttering Mantras. There stands the altar Pratyakshasthali, there my reverend spiritual guides used to collect flowers, their hands shaking from fatigue. Behold, the altar is even now surrounded by the halo of their spiritual glory. They could not travel on account of their langour due to continual fasting. Look, there the seven seas appeared as soon as they were invoked. The barks that used to hang after bath on the branches of the trees for drying have not dried as yet! The lotuses and other flowers with which they used to worship the gods have not yet withered. Rama, thou hast seen all, heard all, permit me now to cast off my body. I shall go to them to whom belongs this hermitage and whom I used to serve."

Rama was greatly pleased at these pious words of

Savari. "It is indeed wonderful," exclaimed Rama, "My noble lady, you have shown me due honour. Go now wherever you like to repair."

Then infirm Savari with matted lock and clad in deer skin, with the permission of Rama, cast her body into burning flame.¹

She then rose from the flame with an effulgent body glowing like fire. Celestial ornaments and jewels shone on her body and a sweet scented heavenly garland hung from her neck. Being robed in heavenly apparel she became exceedingly beautiful and illumined the whole place by the halo of her glory like the glare of lightning. Then through *Samadhi* she reached that blissful region inhabited by great saints.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE JOURNEY

When Savari ascended heaven by virtue of her great penance, Rama thought about the great super-natural power of the saints, and after some time addressing Lakshmana said :

1 The world-renowned scientist Dr Mitchnikoff in his "nature of man" has devoted a long chapter about the universal fear of death. There he has shown that old people are more afraid of death than the young ones (of course, there are enough reasons for it), but in ancient India we find a glorious exception to this where a man prepared himself for death and when the supreme moment came, he gave up his ghost in cheerful resignation. At the fag end of life a saint might sometimes cast off his mortal frame by the yogic concentration of his soul. This is not suicide, but a glorious resurrection, so to say. It is like the rising of the Phoenix, the self-begotten and self-perpetuating bird, in new splendour from the ashes !

"My boy, this asylum abounds in deer, tigers and other animals ; various kinds of birds are chirping here and the place abounds in wonderful things. I have witnessed these miracles with my own eyes and after bathing in the waters of the seven seas have performed in due form the watery rites to the manes of the ancestors. I think my misfortunes have ensued and for this my mind seems to be filled with delight. Let us now repair to the romantic Pampa.

"The Rishyamukha hill is at a little distance from the Pampa. There Sugriva, the son of Surya, resides with four other Vanaras in fear of Vali. I am eager to meet him soon, for the quest of Janaki is entirely in his hands."

Lakshmana replied, "I am too desirous to see the Pampa. Let us, therefore, start without any further delay."

Rama then set out with Lakshmana and proceeded towards the distant-flowing Pampa, surveying all round him, the tall flowery trees, the curlews, peacocks, parrots, wood-peckers crying in the dale and flying through brakes. They, after some time, arrived at Matangasara, a part of the Pampa,¹ and from a distance witnessed the Pampa. The stream of the Pampa was beautiful to see. Its crystal water strewn with blooming lotuses, its banks covered with soft sands and fringed with green vegetation, greeted their eyes. Fishes were swimming in its deep water displaying their silvery fins, and tortoises were floating upon the surface of the

1 The Sanskrit commentator of the epic says that Pampa is the name both of a lake and a rill that flows into the lake.

stream. Part of the lake was copper-red with crimson lotuses, part of it was white with lilies, and part of it blue with the azure blossoms of Kuvalaya ¹ On account of its various hues the stream appeared like a variegated blanket-cover of an elephant. Its banks were girt with blooming Asokas, Punnagas, Vakulas, Tilakas and Uddala trees, and there stood picturesque gardens, where the creepers clung round the trees like a darling's embrace. Its flowery valley was ever haunted by the Kinnaras, Gandharvas, Uragas, Yakshas and the Rakshasas.

Rama at the sight of the beautiful Pampa was smitten with grief for Sita, and addressing Lakshmana said :

"Lakshmana, this lovely stream of Pampa, being girt with various blossoming trees and lovely creepers, appears like a beauty decked in jewels. There stands on its bank the Rishyamukha tinged with the hues of various metals as mentioned by Kavandha. There resides Sugriva, the son of the great Riksharaja. Now, we may go to him without delay. I cannot bear the pangs of Sita's separation any more. O Lakshmana, how shall I live without Sita? I have been deprived of my kingdom, I am really poor, and Sita is my wife. Alas! I know not whether Janaki will survive this separation or not."

Thus lamenting Rama, smitten with sorrow and love for Sita, proceeded slowly towards the beautiful Pampa bright with lotuses, and adorned on all sides by flowery woods, resounding with the sweet notes of various birds.

1 Blue lotus.