

the River Phalgū, when the hands of all three<sup>1</sup> came up out of the river. He was troubled in mind on seeing this, wondering to which of the hands he should give (the oblations), and to which not."

Having reached this stage of the story, the sprite said, "O King Vikram! to which of the three was it right to give the oblations?" Then the king said, "To the thief." The sprite said again, "For what reason?" Thereupon he (the king) said, "The seed of the Brahman had been bought; and the king took a thousand gold mohurs and brought up the boy; and therefore neither of these two had any right to the oblation." On hearing these words, the sprite went again and hung on to that tree, and the king carried him away bound from thence.

<sup>1</sup> That is the thief's, the Brahman's who begat him, and the king's who adopted him. The Hindus believe that when a son performs the ceremony in question, the father is permitted to come from the other world and receive the oblation

## TALE XIX.

THE sprite said, "O king! there is a city named Chitrakūt, the king of which was Rupdatt. One day he mounted his horse and went forth alone to hunt; and, having lost his way, got into a great forest. What does he see on going there but a large tank, in which lotuses were flowering, and various kinds of birds were sporting. On all four sides of the tank cool and perfume-laden breezes were blowing under the shade of the dense foliage of the trees. He, for his part, was overcome with the heat, (so) he tied his horse to a tree, and spread the saddle-cloth, and sat down. A half-hour or so had passed when the daughter of a holy sage, very beautiful, and in the prime of youth, came to gather flowers. Seeing her plucking the flowers, the king became deeply enamoured. When she was returning to her abode, after gathering the flowers, the king said, 'What conduct is this of yours, for you not to attend to me when I have come as a guest to your abode?'"

"On hearing this she stood still again. Then

the king said, 'They say that if one of low caste come as a guest to the house of one of the highest caste, even he is entitled to respect; and whether he be a thief, or an outcast, or an enemy, or a parricide,—if such a one even comes to one's house, it is right to show him honour; for a guest is more to be honoured than anyone else.' When the king spoke thus, she stood still. Then, in truth, the two began to ogle one another. In the meantime the holy sage also came up. The king saluted the devotee on seeing him, and he (in return) blessed him, saying, 'May you live long.' "

"Having said so much, he asked the king, 'Why have you come here?' He replied, 'Your holiness! I have come a hunting.' He said, 'Why dost thou commit a great sin? It is said that one man commits a sin and many men reap the fruits thereof.' The king said, 'Your holiness! kindly favour me with your judgment of right and wrong.' Thereupon the sage said, 'Attend, your majesty! A great wrong is done in killing an animal that lives in the forest, supporting itself on grass<sup>1</sup> and water; and it is a very meritorious act in man to cherish beasts and birds. It is said, moreover, that those who render unapprehensive the timid and refuge-seeking, receive the reward of those who are most liberal givers. It is also said, that no religious austerity equals forbear-

<sup>1</sup> The text has *tan*, by mistake, for *tin*.

ance, and no happiness equals that of contentment, and no wealth equals friendship, and there is no virtue like mercy. Moreover, those men who are conscious of their duties, and show no pride on acquiring riches, accomplishments, learning, renown, or supremacy; and those who are content with their own wives, and are truth-speakers—such men obtain final salvation hereafter. And those who kill ascetics with matted hair, and without clothes and arms, experience the torments of hell at the last. And the king who does not punish the oppressors of his subjects, he also experiences the torments of hell. And those who have carnal intercourse with a king's wife, or the wife or daughter of a friend, or with a woman eight or nine months advanced in pregnancy—they are cast into the (lowest and) greatest hell of all. Thus is it declared in the book of law and religion.' "

"On hearing this, the monarch said, 'The sins which I have heretofore committed in ignorance are done, and are beyond recall; henceforth, God willing, I will not commit such again.' The holy sage was pleased at the king's speaking thus, and said 'I will grant thee any boon thou may'st ask for; I am highly pleased with thee.' Then the king spoke, saying, 'Your holiness! if you are pleased with me, give me your daughter.' When the sage heard this, he married his daughter to the king, after the manner of Gandharb marriages, and departed to his own

place. Then the king took the saint's daughter and set out for his capital. On the road, about mid-way, the sun set and the moon rose. Then the king, seeing a shady tree, alighted beneath it, and tying the horse to its root, spread his saddle-covering and lay down along with her. Thereupon, at the hour of midnight, a Brahman-devouring demon came and awoke the king, saying, 'O king! I will devour thy wife.' The king said, 'Act not so; whatever thou askest for, I will grant.' Then the demon said, 'O king! if thou wilt cut off the head of a Brahman's son seven years' old, and give it to me with thine own hand, I will not eat her.' The king replied, 'Even so will I do; but do thou come to me seven days hence in my capital, and I will give it thee.' "

"Having bound the king by a promise thus, the demon departed to his own place; and on the morn arriving, the king also left and came to his palace. The minister hearing of it (*i.e.*, the king's arrival) made great rejoicings, and came and presented gifts; and the king, after telling the minister of the adventure (with the demon), asked, 'Say, what expedient shall we adopt in the matter, for the demon will come on the seventh day?' The minister said, 'Your majesty! feel no anxiety whatever; God will make all right.' After saying so much, the minister had an image made of a maund and a quarter of gold, and jewels studded therein, and having it placed on a

cart, and (conveyed away, and) set up at a point where four roads met, he said to the keepers thereof, 'If any persons come to look at this, say to them that any Brahman who will allow the king to cut off the head of a seven-year-old son of his may take possession of this.' Having said this, he came away. Thereupon the keepers used to say this to those who came to look at it (the image)."

"Two days passed away without any result. On the third day, however, a weakly Brahman, who had three sons, hearing of this matter, came home and began saying to his wife, 'If thou wilt give a son of thine to the king for a sacrifice, an image of a maund and a quarter of gold, and studded with jewels, will come into the house.' On hearing this, his wife said, 'I will not give the youngest son.' The Brahman said, 'The eldest I will not part with.' When the second son heard this, he said, 'Father! give me up.' He replied, 'Very well.' Then the Brahman spoke again, saying, 'Wealth it is which is the source of all happiness in this world. Now, what happiness can reach him who lacks wealth? and if one be poor, his coming into the world is useless.' "

"Having said this, he took the second son, and gave him up to the guards, and brought away the image to his house; and the people, for their part, took the boy to the minister. Further, when seven days passed away, the demon, too, came. The king

took sandal, unbroken rice, flowers, perfumes, lamps, food for the deity, fruits and betel-leaf, and paid adoration to him; and, summoning the boy, took his sword in his hand, and stood ready to sacrifice him. Thereupon the boy first laughed, and then wept. While he was doing this, the king struck him a blow with the sword, so that his head was severed (from his body). True it is, as the sages have said,—Woman is the source (*lit.* mine) of misery in the world, the abode of imprudence<sup>1</sup> (or immorality), the destroyer of courage (or daring), and the occasioner of infatuation, (and) the bereaver of virtue. Who has pronounced such a source (*lit.* root) of venom to be the highest good? Again, it is said,—Store up wealth against adversity, and disburse wealth to guard your wife, and give up wealth and wife to save your own life.”

Having related so much of the story, the sprite said, “Your majesty! a man weeps at the moment of dying; will you account for this,—Why did he (the boy) laugh?” The monarch replied, “He laughed at the thought of this,—viz., That in infancy a mother protects (her child), and on his growing up the father cherishes him; (and) in both good and bad times a king befriends his subjects,—such is the way of the

<sup>1</sup> The only meanings assigned to *binī* in the vocabulary are, “submission,” “respects,” “solicitation,” none of which seem to apply here. Deriving the word from the Sanskrit *vi-nīti*, I prefer giving it the signification I have done.

world; whereas, my predicament is such that my father and mother have delivered me over to the king through greed of wealth, and he stands, sword in hand, ready to slay me, and the demon desires a sacrifice; no single one of them feels (a spark of) pity.” On hearing this, the sprite went and hung on to that same tree; and the king also speedily arrived there, and binding him, placed him on his shoulder, and carried him off.