

TALE XX.

THE sprite said, "O king! there is a city named Bishālpur, the king of which was named Bipuleshwar. In his city lived a merchant whose name was Arth-datt, and his daughter's name was Anang-manjarī. He had married her to a merchant of Kanwalpur, named Munnī. Some days after, the merchant crossed the ocean on a mercantile venture; and when she attained to womanhood here (at home), she was standing one day in the pavilion, and observing what was going on in the road, when at that moment a Brahman's son named Kamalākar was coming along. The eyes of the pair met, and they became enamoured of each other at first sight. Again, after a quarter of an hour or so, recovering self-possession, the Brahman's son, in the restlessness consequent on separation from his beloved, proceeded to the house of his friend; and here she, too, was in extreme distress through the pain of separation from him, when, in the meantime, a female companion came and took her up; she had,

however, no self-consciousness remaining. Then she (the companion) sprinkled rose-water (over her) and made her smell perfumes, and while so doing, her senses returned, and she said, 'O Cupid! Mahādeva burnt thee to ashes,¹ and yet thou wilt not desist from thy knavish tricks, but comest and inflictest pain on innocent, feeble women.'"

"She was uttering these words, when evening came on, and the moon appeared. Then she said, while gazing at the moonlight, 'O moon! I used to be told that the water of life is in you, and that you shed it in your beams; to-day, however, even you have begun to pour down venom.' She then said to her companion, 'Take me up, and lead me away from this place, for I am being burnt to death by the moonlight.' Thereupon she raised her and took her to the pavilion, and said, 'Dost thou feel no shame at uttering such words?' Then she said, 'O friend! I am fully aware of all; but Cupid has wounded me, and rendered me void of shame; and I make great efforts to be patient, but the more I continue to be consumed with the fire of separation, the more venom-like does home appear to me.' The companion said, 'Keep thy mind at ease; I will relieve thee of all thy suffering.'"

¹ Mahādeva, or Iiva, was once engaged in religious meditation, when Kāmadeva, or Cupid, excited amorous desires within his breast; whereupon the angry god reduced him to ashes by a fiery glance. The curious reader will find a detailed account of the circumstance in the fifty-sixth Chapter of the *Prem Sagar*.

Having said thus much, the companion went home, and she (the love-lorn) determined in her mind that she would quit this body for his sake, and, being born again, enjoy life well with him. With this longing in her mind, she threw a noose on her neck, and was about drawing it tight, when the companion arrived, and instantly taking the rope off her neck, said, 'Everything can be attained by living, not by dying.' She replied, 'Better is it to die than suffer such pain.' The companion said, 'Repose awhile, and I will go and bring him.' "

"Having said this, she went to the place where Kamalākar was, and taking a secret look at him, perceived that he also was much disturbed by the separation from his beloved, while his friend was rubbing down sandal in rose water and applying it to his body, and fanning him with tender leaves of the plantain-tree; despite which, he was crying out all aflame (with passion) and saying to his friend, 'Bring me poison, I will sacrifice my life and be released from this suffering. Observing this state of his, she said to herself, 'However courageous, learned, sagacious, discreet, and patient a man may be, Cupid reduces him to a state of distraction all the same.' These thoughts having passed through her mind, the companion said to him, 'O Kamalākar! Anangmanjari has sent word to thee to come and bestow life on her.' He replied, 'She, indeed, has given life to me.' "

After saying this, he rose up, and the companion went to her (the love-sick maiden), taking him along with her. When he got there, lo! she was lying dead! Thereupon he also uttered a cry of anguish, and therewith his spirit fled. And when it became morning, her household took both of them to the burning-ground, and arranging the pile, placed them thereon and set fire to it, when, in the meantime, her husband also arrived at the burning-ground, on his return from abroad. Then, hearing the sound of the people's weeping, he went there, and what does he behold but his wife burning with a strange man! He, also, being distracted with love, burnt himself to death in the same fire. The people of the city, hearing this intelligence, began saying one to another, 'Neither has eye seen, nor ear heard of so wonderful an event!'"

After relating so much of the story, the sprite said, "O king! whose love, of these three, was greatest?" The king said, "Her husband was the deepest lover." "Why?" said the sprite. The king replied, "He, who, on seeing his wife dead for another's sake, put aside anger, and cheerfully laid down his life through love for her—he is the deepest lover." Hearing these words, the sprite went again and hung on to that tree. The king, too, went there, bound him, placed him on his shoulder, and carried him off.