CANTO XXVIII.

THE DANGERS OF THE WOOD.

Thus Sítá spake, and he who knew
His duty, to its orders true,
Was still reluctant as the woes
Of forest life before him rose.
He sought to soothe her grief, to dry
The torrent from each brimming eye,
And then, her firm resolve to shake,
These words the pious hero spake:

'O daughter of a noble line,
Whose steps from virtue ne'er decline,
Remain, thy duties here pursue,
As my fond heart would have thee do.
Now hear me, Sítá, fair and weak,
And do the words that I shall speak.
Attend and hear while I explain
Each danger in the wood, each pain.
Thy lips have spoken: I condemn
Tho' foolish words that fell from them.
This senseless plan, this wish of thine
To live a forest life, resign.
The names of trouble and distress
Suit well the tangled wilderness.
In the wild wood no joy I know,
A forest life is naught but woe.
The lion in his mountain cave
Answers the torrents as they rave,
And forth his voice of terror throws:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
There mighty monsters fearless play,
And in their maddened onset slay
The hapless wretch who near them goes:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
'Tis hard to ford each treacherous flood,
So thick with crocodiles and mud,
Where the wild elephants repose:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
Or far from streams the wanderer strays
Through thorns and creeper-tangled ways,
While round him many a wild-cock crows:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
On the cold ground upon a heap
Of gathered leaves condemned to sleep,
Toil-wearied, will his eyelids close:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
Long days and nights must he content
His soul with scanty aliment,
What fruit the wind from branches blows:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
O Sítá, while his strength may last,
The ascetic in the wood must fast,
Coil on his head his matted hair,
And bark must be his only wear.
To Gods and spirits day by day
The ordered worship he must pay,
And honour with respectful care
Each wandering guest who meets him there.
The bathing rites he ne'er must shun
At dawn, at noon, at set of sun,
Obedient to the law he knows:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
To grace the altar must be brought
The gift of flowers his hands have sought—
The debt each pious hermit owes:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
The devotee must be content
To live, severely abstinent,
On what the chance of fortune shows:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
Hunger afflicts him evermore;
The nights are black, the wild winds roar;
And there are dangers worse than those:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
There creeping things in every form
Infest the earth, the serpents swarm,
And each proud eye with fury glows:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
The snakes that by the rivers hide
In sinuous course like rivers glide,
And line the path with deadly foes:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
Scorpions, and grasshoppers, and flies
Disturb the wanderer as he lies,
And wake him from his troubled daze:
The wood, my love, is full of woes.
Trees, thorny bushes, intertwined,
Their branches' ends together bind,
And dense with grass the thicket grows:
The wood, my dear, is full of woes.
With many ills the flesh is tried,
When these and countless fears beside
Vex those who in the wood remain:
The wilds are naught but grief and pain.
Hope, anger must be cast aside,
To penance every thought applied:
No fear must be of things to fear:
Hence is the wood for ever drear.
Enough, my love: thy purpose quit:
For forest life thou art not fit.
As thus I think on all, I see
The wild wood is no place for thee.'
CANTO XXIX.

SÍTÁ'S APPEAL.

Thus Ráma spake. Her lord's address
The lady heard with deep distress,
And, as the tear bedimmed her eye,
In soft low accents made reply:
'The perils of the wood, and all
The woes thou countest to appal,
Led by my love I deem not pain;
Each woe a charm, each loss a gain.
Tiger, and elephant, and deer,
Bull, lion, buffalo, in fear,
Soon as thy matchless form they see,
With every silvan beast will flee.
With thee, O Ráma, I must go:
My sire's command ordains it so.
Bereft of thee, my lonely heart
Must break, and life and I must part.
While thou, O mighty lord, art nigh,
Not even He who rules the sky,
Though He is strongest of the strong,
With all his might can do me wrong.
Nor can a lonely woman left
By her dear husband live bereft.
In my great love, my lord, I ween,
The truth of this thou mayst have seen.
In my sire's palace long ago
I heard the chief of those who know,
The truth-declaring Bráhmans, tell
My fortune, in the wood to dwell.
I heard their promise who divine
The future by each mark and sign,
And from that hour have longed to lead
The forest life their lips decreed.
Now, mighty Rāma, I must share
Thy father's doom which sends thee there,
In this I will not be denied,
But follow, love, where thou shalt guide.
O husband, I will go with thee,
Obedient to that high decree.
Now let the Brāhmans' words be true,
For this the time they had in view.
I know full well the wood has woes;
But they disturb the lives of those
Who in the forest dwell, nor hold
Their rebel senses well controlled.
In my sire's halls, ere I was wed,
I heard a dame who begged her bread
Before my mother's face relate
What griefs a forest life await.
And many a time in sport I prayed
To seek with thee the greenwood shade,
For O, my heart on this is set,
To follow thee, dear anchoret.
May blessings on thy life attend:
I long with thee my steps to bend,
For with such hero as thou art
This pilgrimage enchants my heart.
Still close, my lord, to thy dear side,
My spirit will be purified:
Love from all sin my soul will free:
My husband is a God to me.
So, love, with thee shall I have bliss
And share the life that follows this.
I heard a Brāhman, dear to fame,
This ancient Scripture text proclaim:
'The woman whom on earth below
Her parents on a man bestow,
And lawfully their hands unite
With water and each holy rite,
She in this world shall be his wife,
His also in the after life.'
Then tell me, O beloved, why
Thou wilt this earnest prayer deny,
Nor take me with thee to the wood,
Thine own dear wife so true and good.
But if thou wilt not take me there
Thus grieving in my wild despair,
To fire or water I will fly,
Or to the poisoned draught, and die.'

So thus to share his exile, she
Besought him with each earnest plea,
Nor could she yet her lord persuade
To take her to the lonely shade.
The answer of the strong-armed chief
Smote the Videhan's soul with grief,
And from her eyes the torrents came
Bathing the bosom of the dame.
CANTO XXX.

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

The daughter of Videha's king,
While Rāma strove to soothe the sting
Of her deep anguish, thus began
Once more in furtherance of her plan:
And with her spirit sorely tried
By fear and anger, love and pride,
With keenly taunting words addressed
Her hero of the stately breast:
'Why did the king my sire, who reigns
O'er fair Videha's wide domains,
Hail Rāma son with joy unwise,
A woman in a man's disguise?
Now falsely would the people say,
By idle fancies led astray,
That Rāma's own are power and might,
As glorious as the Lord of Light.
Why sinkest thou in such dismay?
What fears upon thy spirit weigh,
That thou, O Rāma, fain wouldst flee
From her who thinks of naught but thee?
To thy dear will am I resigned
In heart and body, soul and mind,
As Sāvitrī gave all to one,
Satyavān, Dyumatsena's son."

1 The story of Sāvitrī, told in the Mahābhārata, has been admirably translated by Rückert, and elegantly epitomized by Mrs. Manning in India, Ancient and Medieval. There is a free rendering of the story in Idylls from the Sanskrit.
Not e'en in fancy can I brook
To any guard save thee to look:
Let meaner wives their houses shame,
To go with thee is all my claim.
Like some low actor, deemst thou fit
Thy wife to others to commit—
Thine own, espoused in maiden youth,
Thy wife so long, unblamed for truth?
Do thou, my lord, his will obey
For whom thou losest royal sway,
To whom thou wouldst thy wife confide—
Not me, but thee, his wish may guide.
Thou must not here thy wife forsake,
And to the wood thy journey make,
Whether stern penance, grief, and care,
Or rule or heaven await thee there.
Nor shall fatigue my limbs distress
When wandering in the wilderness:
Each path which near to thee I tread
Shall seem a soft luxurious bed.
The reeds, the bushes where I pass,
The thorny trees, the tangled grass
Shall feel, if only thou be near,
Soft to my touch as skins of deer.
When the rude wind in fury blows,
And scattered dust upon me throws,
That dust, beloved lord, to me
Shall as the precious sandal be.
And what shall be more blest than I,
When gazing on the wood I lie
In some green glade upon a bed
With sacred grass beneath us spread?
The root, the leaf, the fruit which thou
Shalt give me from the earth or bough,
Scanty or plentiful, to eat,
Shall taste to me as Amrit sweet.
As there I live on flowers and roots
And every season's kindly fruits,
I will not for my mother grieve,
My sire, my home, or all I leave.
My presence, love, shall never add
One pain to make thy heart more sad;
I will not cause thee grief or care,
Nor be a burden hard to bear.
With thee is heaven, where'er the spot;
Each place is hell where thou art not.
Then go with me, O Ráma; this
Is all my hope and all my bliss.
If thou wilt leave thy wife who still
Entreats thee with undaunted will,
This very day shall poison close
The life that spurns the rule of foes.
How, after, can my soul sustain
The bitter life of endless pain,
When thy dear face, my lord, I miss?
No, death is better far than this.
Not for an hour could I endure
The deadly grief that knows not cure,
Far less a woe I could not shun
For ten long years, and three, and one.'

While fires of woe consumed her, such
Her sad appeal, lamenting much;
Then with a wild cry, anguish-wrung,
About her husband's neck she clung.
Like some she-elephant who bleeds
Struck by the hunter's venomed reeds,
So in her quivering heart she felt
The many wounds his speeches dealt.
Then, as the spark from wood is gained,\footnote{Fire for sacrificial purposes is produced by the attrition of two pieces of wood.}
Down rolled the tear so long restrained:
The crystal moisture, sprung from woe,
From her sweet eyes began to flow,
As runs the water from a pair
Of lotuses divinely fair.
And Sítá's face with long dark eyes,
Pure as the moon of autumn skies,
Faded with weeping, as the buds
Of lotuses when sink the floods.
Around his wife his arms he strained,
Who senseless from her woe remained,
And with sweet words, that bade her wake
To life again, the hero spake:
'I would not with thy woe, my Queen,
Buy heaven and all its blissful sheen.
Void of all fear am I as He,
The self-existent God, can be.
I knew not all thy heart till now,
Dear lady of the lovely brow,
So wished not thee in woods to dwell;
Yet there mine arm can guard thee well.
Now surely thou, dear love, wast made
To dwell with me in greenwood shade.
And, as a high saint's tender mind
Clings to its love for all mankind,
So I to thee will ever cling,
Sweet daughter of Videha's king.
The good, of old, O soft of frame,
Honoured this duty's sovereign claim,
And I its guidance will not shun,
True as light's Queen is to the Sun.
I cannot, pride of Janak’s line,
This journey to the wood decline:
My sire’s behest, the oath he sware,
The claims of truth, all lead me there.
One duty, dear, the same for aye,
Is sire and mother to obey:
Should I their orders once transgress
My very life were weariness.
If glad obedience be denied
To father, mother, holy guide,
What rites, what service can be done
That stern Fate’s favour may be won?
These three the triple world comprise,
O darling of the lovely eyes.
Earth has no holy thing like these
Whom with all love men seek to please.
Not truth, or gift, or bended knee,
Not honour, worship, lordly fee,
Storms heaven and wins a blessing thence
Like solely love and reverence.
Heaven, riches, grain, and varied lore,
With sons and many a blessing more,
All these are made their own with ease
By those their elders’ souls who please.
The mighty-souled, who ne’er forget,
Devoted sons, their filial debt,
Win worlds where Gods and minstrels are,
And Brahma’s sphere more glorious far.
Now as the orders of my sire,
Who keeps the way of truth, require,
So will I do, for such the way
Of duty that endures for aye.
To take thee, love, to Dandak’s wild
My heart at length is reconciled,
For thee such earnest thoughts impel
To follow, and with me to dwell.
O faultless form from feet to brows,
Come with me, as my will allows,
And duty there with me pursue,
Trembler, whose bright eyes thrill me through.
In all thy days, come good come ill,
Preserve unchanged such noble will,
And thou, dear love, wilt ever be
The glory of thy house and me.
Now, beauteous-armed, begin the tasks
The woodland life of hermits asks.
For me the joys of heaven above
Have charms no more without thee, love.
And now, dear Sítá, be not slow:
Food on good mendicants bestow,
And for the holy Bráhmans bring
Thy treasures and each precious thing.
Thy best attire and gems collect,
The jewels which thy beauty decked,
And every ornament and toy
Prepared for hours of sport and joy:
The beds, the cars wherein I ride,
Among our followers, next, divide.'

She conscious that her lord approved
Her going, with great rapture moved,
Hastened within, without delay,
Prepared to give their wealth away.
CANTO XXXI.

LAKSHMAN'S PRAYER.

When Lakshman, who had joined them there,
Had heard the converse of the pair,
His mien was changed, his eyes o'erflowed,
His breast no more could bear its load.
The son of Raghu, sore distressed,
His brother's feet with fervour pressed,
While thus to Sita he complained,
And him by lofty vows enchained:
'If thou wilt make the woods thy home,
Where elephant and roebuck roam,
I too this day will take my bow
And in the path before thee go.
Our way will lie through forest ground
Where countless birds and beasts are found.
I heed not homes of Gods on high,
I heed not life that cannot die,
Nor would I wish, with thee away,
O'er the three worlds to stretch my sway.'

Thus Lakshman spake, with earnest prayer
His brother's woodland life to share.
As Rama still his prayer denied
With soothing words, again he cried:
'When leave at first thou didst accord,
Why dost thou stay me now, my lord?
Thou art my refuge: O, be kind,
Leave me not, dear my lord, behind.
Thou canst not, brother, if thou choose
That I still live, my wish refuse.'

The glorious chief his speech renewed
To faithful Lakshman as he sued,
And on the eyes of Ráma gazed.
Longing to lead, with hands upraised:
'Thou art a hero just and dear,
Whose steps to virtue's path adhere,
Loved as my life till life shall end,
My faithful brother and my friend.
If to the woods thou take thy way
With Sítá and with me to-day,
Who for Kauśalyá will provide,
And guard the good Súmitrá's side?
The lord of earth, of mighty power,
Who sends good things in plenteous shower,
As Indra pours the grateful rain,
A captive lies in passion's chain.
The power imperial for her son
Has Aśvapati's daughter\(^1\) won,
And she, proud queen, will little heed
Her miserable rivals' need.
So Bharat, ruler of the land,
By Queen Káikeyí's side will stand,
Nor of those two will ever think,
While grieving in despair they sink.
Now, Lakshman, as thy love decrees,
Or else the monarch's heart to please,
Follow this counsel and protect
My honoured mother from neglect.
So thou, while not to me alone
Thy great affection will be shown,
To highest duty wilt adhere
By serving those thou shouldst revere.

\(^1\) Káikeyí.
Now, son of Raghu, for my sake
Obey this one request I make,
Or, of her darling son bereft,
Kauśalyā has no comfort left.'

The faithful Lakshman, thus addressed
In gentle words which love expressed,
To him in lore of language learned,
His answer, eloquent, returned:

'Nay, through thy might each queen will share
Attentive Bharat's love and care.
Should Bharat, raised as king to sway
This noblest realm, his trust betray,
Nor for their safety well provide,
Seduced by ill-suggesting pride,
Doubt not my vengeful hand shall kill
The cruel wretch who counsels ill—
Kill him and all who lend him aid,
And the three worlds in league arrayed.
And good Kauśalyā well can see
A thousand champions like to me.
A thousand hamlets rich in grain
The station of that queen maintain.
She may, and my dear mother too,
Live on this ample revenue.
Then let me follow thee: herein
Is naught that may resemble sin.
So shall I in my wish succeed,
And aid, perhaps, my brother's need.
My bow and quiver well supplied
With arrows hanging at my side,
My hands shall spade and basket bear,
And for thy feet the way prepare.
I'll bring thee roots and berries sweet,
And woodland fare which hermits eat.
Canto XXXI. THE RAMAYAN.

Thou shalt with thy Videhan spouse
Recline upon the mountain's brows;
Be mine the toil, be mine to keep
Watch o'er thee waking or asleep.'

Filled by his speech with joy and pride,
Ráma to Lakshman thus replied:
'Go then, my brother, bid adieu
To all thy friends and retinue.
And those two bows of fearful might,
Celestial, which, at that famed rite,
Lord Varuṇ gave to Janak, king
Of fair Videha, with thee bring,
With heavenly coats of sword-proof mail,
Quivers, whose arrows never fail,
And golden-hilted swords so keen,
The rivals of the sun in sheen.
Tended with care these arms are all
Preserved in my preceptor's hall.
With speed, O Lakshman, go, produce,
And bring them hither for our use.'
So on a woodland life intent,
To see his faithful friends he went,
And brought the heavenly arms which lay
By Ráma's teacher stored away.
And Raghu's son to Ráma showed
Those wondrous arms which gleamed and glowed,
Well kept, adorned with many a wreath
Of flowers on case, and hilt, and sheath.
The prudent Ráma at the sight
Addressed his brother with delight:
'Well art thou come, my brother dear,
For much I longed to see thee here.
For with thine aid, before I go,
I would my gold and wealth bestow
Upon the Brāhmans sage, who school
Their lives by stern devotion's rule.
And for all those who ever dwell
Within my house and serve me well,
Devoted servants, true and good,
Will I provide a livelihood.
Quick, go and summon to this place
   The good Vasishṭha's son,
Suyajna, of the Brāhman race
   The first and holiest one.
To all the Brāhmans wise and good
   Will I due reverence pay,
Then to the solitary wood
   With thee will take my way.
CANTO XXXII.

THE GIFT OF THE TREASURES.

That speech so noble which conveyed
His friendly wish, the chief obeyed.
With steps made swift by anxious thought
The wise Suyajna’s home he sought.
Him in the hall of Fire¹ he found,
And bent before him to the ground:
‘O friend, to Ráma’s house return,
Who now performs a task most stern.’
He, when his noonday rites were done,
Went forth with fair Sumitra’s son,
And came to Ráma’s bright abode
Rich in the love which Lakshmi showed.
The son of Raghu, with his dame,
With joined hands met him as he came,
Showing to him who Scripture knew
The worship that is Agni’s due.
With armlets, bracelets, collars, rings,
With costly pearls on golden strings,
With many a gem for neck and limb
The son of Raghu honoured him.
Then Ráma, at his wife’s request,
The wise Suyajna thus addressed:
‘Accept a necklace too to deck
With golden strings thy spouse’s neck.
And Sítá here, my friend, were glad
A girdle to her gift to add.

¹ The chapel where the sacred fire used in worship is kept.
And many a bracelet wrought with care,
And many an armlet rich and rare,
My wife to thine is fain to give,
Departing in the wood to live.
A bed by skilful workmen made,
With gold and various gems inlaid—
This too, before she goes, would she
Present, O saintly friend, to thee.
Thine be my elephant, so famed,
My uncle's present, Victor named;
And let a thousand coins of gold,
Great Bráhman, with the gift be told.'
Thus Ráma spoke: nor he declined
The noble gifts for him designed.
On Ráma, Lakshman, Sítá he
Invoked all high felicity.

In pleasant words then Ráma gave
His hest to Lakshman prompt and brave,
As Brahmá speaks for Him to hear
Who rules the Gods' celestial sphere:
'To the two best of Bráhmans run;
Agastya bring, and Kuśik's son,
And precious gifts upon them rain,
Like fostering floods upon the grain.
O long-armed Prince of Raghu's line,
Delight them with a thousand kine,
And many a fair and costly gem,
With gold and silver, give to them.
To him, so deep in Scripture, who,
To Queen Kauśalyá ever true,
Serves her with blessing and respect,
Chief of the Taittiríya sect'—

1 The students and teachers of the Taittiríya portion of the Yajur Veda.
To him, with women-slaves, present
A chariot rich with ornament,
And costly robes of silk beside,
Until the sage be satisfied.
On Chitraratha, true and dear,
My tuneful bard and charioteer,
Gems, robes, and plenteous wealth confer.
Mine ancient friend and minister.
And these who go with staff in hand,
Grammarians trained, a numerous band,
Who their deep study only prize,
Nor think of other exercise,
Who toil not, loving dainty fare,
Whose praises c'en the good declare—
On these be eighty cars bestowed,
And each with precious treasures load.
A thousand bulls for them suffice,
Two hundred elephants of price,
And let a thousand kine beside
The dainties of each meal provide.
The throng who sacred girdles wear,
And on Kauśalyā wait with care—
A thousand golden coins shall please,
Son of Sumitrā, each of these.
Let all, dear Lakshman, of the train
These special gifts of honour gain:
My mother will rejoice to know
Her Brāhmans have been cherished so.'

Then Raghu's son addressed the crowd
Who round him stood and wept aloud,
When he to all who thronged the court
Had dealt his wealth for their support:
'In Lakshman's house and mine remain,
And guard them till I come again.'
To all his people sad with grief,
In loving words thus spoke their chief,
Then bade his treasure-keeper bring
Gold, silver, and each precious thing.
Then straight the servants went and bore
Back to their chief the wealth in store.
Before the people's eyes it shone,
A glorious pile to look upon.
The prince of men with Lakshman's aid
Parted the treasures there displayed,
Gave to the poor, the young, the old,
And twice-born men, the gems and gold.

A Brâhman, long in evil case,
Named Trijat, born of Garga's race,
Earned ever toiling in a wood
With spade and plough his livelihood.
The youthful wife, his babes who bore,
Their indigence felt more and more.
Thus to the aged man she spake:
'Hear this my word: my counsel take.
Come, throw thy spade and plough away;
To virtuous Râma go to-day,
And somewhat of his kindness pray.'

He heard the words she spoke: around
His limbs his ragged cloth he wound,
And took his journey by the road
That led to Râma's fair abode.
To the fifth court he made his way;
Nor met the Brâhman check or stay.
Brighu, Angiras¹ could not be
Brighter with saintly light than he.
To Râma's presence on he pressed,

¹ Two of the ten divine personages called Prajâpati and Brâhmâ-\
  đikas who were first created by Brahmâ.
And thus the noble chief addressed:
'O Ráma, poor and weak am I,
And many children round me cry.
Scant living in the woods I earn:
On me thine eye of pity turn.'
And Ráma, bent on sport and jest,
The suppliants Bráhman thus addressed:
'O aged man, one thousand kine,
Yet undistributed, are mine.
The cows on thee will I bestow
As far as thou thy staff canst throw.'
The Bráhman heard. In eager haste
He bound his cloth around his waist.
Then round his head his staff he whirled,
And forth with mightiest effort hurled.
Cast from his hand it flew, and sank
To earth on Sarjú's farther bank,
Where herds of kine in thousands fed
Near to the well-stocked bullock shed.
And all the cows that wandered o'er
The meadow, far as Sarjú's shore,
At Ráma's word the herdsmen drove
To Trijá's cottage in the grove.
He drew the Bráhman to his breast,
And thus with calming words addressed:
'Now be not angry, Sire, I pray:
This jest of mine was meant in play.
These thousand kine, but not alone,
Their herdsmen too, are all thine own.
And wealth beside I give thee: speak,
Thine shall be all thy heart can seek.'

Thus Ráma spake. And Trijá prayed
For means his sacrifice to aid.
And Ráma gave much wealth, required
To speed his offering as desired.
CANTO XXXIII.

THE PEOPLE'S LAMENT.

Thus Sítá and the princes brave
Much wealth to all the Bráhmans gave.
Then to the monarch's house the three
Went forth the aged king to see.
The princes from two servants took
Those heavenly arms of glorious look,
Adorned with garland and with band
By Sítá's beautifying band.
On each high house a mournful throng
Had gathered ere they passed along,
Who gazed in pure unselfish woe
From turret, roof, and portico.
So dense the crowd that blocked the ways,
The rest, unable there to gaze,
Were fain each terrace to ascend,
And thence their eyes on Ráma bend.
Then as the gathered multitude
On foot their well-loved Ráma viewed,
No royal shade to screen his head,
Such words, disturbed by grief, they said:
'O look, our hero, wont to ride
Leading a host in perfect pride—
Now Lakshman, sole of all his friends,
With Sítá on his steps attends.
Though he has known the sweets of power,
And poured his gifts in liberal shower,
From duty's path he will not swerve,
But still his father's truth preserve.
And she whose form so soft and fair
Was veiled from spirits of the air,
Now walks unsheltered from the day,
Seen by the crowds who throng the way.
Ah, for that gently-nurtured form!
How will it fade with sun and storm!
How will the rain, the cold, the heat
Mar fragrant breast and tinted feet!
Surely some demon has possessed
His sire, and speaks within his breast,
Or how could one that is a king
Thus send his dear son wandering?
It were a deed unkindly done
To banish e'en a worthless son:
But what, when his pure life has gained
The hearts of all, by love enchained?
Six sovereign virtues join to grace
Rāma the foremost of his race:
Tender and kind and pure is he,
Docile, religious, passion-free.
Hence misery strikes not him alone:
In bitterest grief the people moan;
Like creatures of the stream, when dry
In the great heat the channels lie.
The world is mournful with the grief
That falls on its beloved chief,
As, when the root is hewn away,
Tree, fruit, and flower, and bud decay.
The soul of duty, bright to see,
He is the root of you and me;
And all of us, who share his grief,
His branches, blossom, fruit, and leaf.
Now like the faithful Lakshman, we
Will follow and be true as he;
Our wives and kinsmen call with speed,
And hasten where our lord shall lead.
Yes, we will leave each well-loved spot,
The field, the garden, and the cot,
And, sharers of his weal and woe,
Behind the pious Ráma go.
Our houses, empty of their stores,
With ruined courts and broken doors,
With all their treasures borne away,
And gear that made them bright and gay:
O’errun by rats, with dust o’erspread,
Shrines, whence the deities have fled,
Where not a hand the water pours,
Or sweeps the long-neglected floors,
No incense loads the evening air,
No Bráhmans chant the text and prayer,
No fire of sacrifice is bright,
No gift is known, no sacred rite;
With floors which broken vessels strew,
As if our woes had crushed them too—
Of these be stern Kaikeyí queen,
And rule o’er homes where we have been.
The wood where Ráma’s feet may roam
Shall be our city and our home,
And this fair city we forsake,
Our flight a wilderness shall make.
Each serpent from his hole shall hie,
The birds and beasts from mountains fly,
Lions and elephants in fear
Shall quit the woods when we come near,
Yield the broad wilds for us to range,
And take our city in exchange.
With Ráma will we hence, content
If, where h' is, our days be spent.'
Such were the varied words the crowd
Of all conditions spoke aloud.
And Rāma heard their speeches, yet
Changed not his purpose firmly set.
His father's palace soon he neared,
That like Kailāsa's hill appeared.
Like a wild elephant he strode
Right onward to the bright abode.
Within the palace court he stepped,
Where ordered bands their station kept,
And saw Sumantra standing near
With down-cast eye and gloomy cheer.
CANTO XXXIV.

RÁMA IN THE PALACE.

The dark incomparable chief
Whose eye was like a lotus leaf,
Cried to the mournful charioteer,
‘Go tell my sire that I am here.’

Sumantra, sad and all dismayed,
The chieftain’s order swift obeyed.
Within the palace doors he hied
And saw the king, who wept and sighed.
Like the great sun when wrapped in shade,
Like fire by ashes overlaid,
Or like a pool with waters dried,
So lay the world’s great lord and pride.
A while the wise Sumantra gazed
On him whose senses woe had dazed,
Grieving for Ráma. Near he drew
With hands upraised in reverence due.
With blessing first his king he hailed;
Then with a voice that well-nigh failed,
In trembling accents soft and low
Addressed the monarch in his woe:
‘The prince of men, thy Ráma, waits
To see thee at the palace gates.
His wealth to Bráhmans he has dealt,
And all who in his home have dwelt.
Admit thy son. His friends have heard
His kind farewell and parting word.
He longs to see thee first, and then
Canto XXXIV. THE RAMAYAN.

Will seek the wilds, O King of men.
He, with each princely virtue's blaze,
Shines as the sun engirt by rays.'

The truthful king who loved to keep
The law, profound as Ocean's deep,
And stainless as the dark blue sky,
Thus to Sumantra made reply:
'Go then, Sumantra, go and call
My wives and ladies one and all.
Drawn round me shall they fill the place
When I behold my Râma's face.'

Quick to the inner rooms he sped,
And thus to all the women said,
'Come, at the summons of the king:
Come all, and make no tarrying.'

Their husband's word, by him conveyed,
Soon as they heard, the dames obeyed,
And following his guidance all
Came thronging to the regal hall.
In number half seven hundred, they,
All lovely dames, in long array,
With their bright eyes for weeping red,
To stand round Queen Kauśalyâ, sped.
They gathered, and the monarch viewed
One moment all the multitude,
Then to Sumantra spoke and said:
'Now let my son be hither led.'

Sumantra went. Then Râma came,
And Lakshman, and the Maithil dame,
And, as he led them on, their guide
Straight to the monarch's presence hied.
When yet far off the father saw
His son with raised palms toward him draw,
Girt by his ladies, sick with woes,
Swift from his royal seat he rose.
With all his strength the aged man
To meet his darling Ráma ran,
But trembling, wild with dark despair,
Fell on the ground and fainted there.
And Lakshman, wont in cars to ride,
And Ráma, threw them by the side
Of the poor miserable king,
Half lifeless with his sorrow's sting.
Throughout the spacious hall up went
A thousand women's wild lament:
'Ah Ráma!' thus they wailed and wept,
And anklets tinkled as they stepped.
Around his body, weeping, threw
Their loving arms the brothers two,
And then, with Sítá's gentle aid,
The king upon a couch was laid.
At length to earth's imperial lord,
When life and knowledge were restored,
Though seas of woe went o'er his head,
With suppliant hands thus Ráma said:
'Lord of us all, great King, thou art:
Bid me farewell before we part.
To Daṇḍak wood this day I go:
One blessing and one look bestow.
Let Lakshman my companion be,
And Sítá also follow me.
With truthful pleas I sought to bend
Their purpose; but no ear they lend.
Now cast this sorrow from thy heart,
And let us all, great King, depart.
As Brahmá sends his children, so
Let Lakshman, me, and Sítá go.'

He stood unmoved, and watched intent
Until the king should grant consent.
Upon his son his eyes he cast,
And thus the monarch spake at last:
‘O Ráma, by her arts enslaved,
I gave the boons Kaikeyí craved,
Unfit to reign, by her misled:
Be ruler in thy father’s stead.’

Thus by the lord of men addressed,
Ráma, of virtue’s friends the best,
In lore of language duly learned,
His answer, reverent, thus returned:
‘A thousand years, O King, remain
O’er this our city still to reign.
I in the woods my life will lead:
The lust of rule no more I heed.
Nine years and five I there will spend,
And when the portioned days shall end,
Will come, my vows and exile o’er,
And clasp thy feet, my King, once more.’

A captive in the snare of truth,
Weeping, distressed with woe and ruth,
Thus spake the monarch, while the queen
Kaikeyí urged him on unseen:

‘Go then, O Rána, and begin
Thy course unvext by fear and sin:
Go, my beloved son, and earn
Success, and joy, and safe return.
So fast the bonds of duty bind,
O Raghu’s son, thy truthful mind,
That naught can turn thee back, or guide
Thy will so strongly fortified.
But O, a little longer stay,
Nor turn thy steps this night away,
That I one little day—alas!'
One only—with my son may pass,
Me and thy mother do not slight,
But stay, my son, with me to-night;
With every dainty please thy taste,
And seek to-morrow morn the waste.
Hard is thy task, O Raghu's son,
Dire is the toil thou wilt not shun,
Far to the lonely wood to flee,
And leave thy friends for love of me.
I swear it by my truth, believe,
For thee, my son, I deeply grieve,
Misguided by the traitress dame
With hidden guile like smouldering flame.
Now, by her wicked counsel stirred,
Thou fain wouldst keep my plighted word.
No marvel that my eldest born
Would hold me true when I have sworn.'

Then Ráma having calmly heard
His wretched father speak each word,
With Lakshman standing by his side
Thus, humbly, to the king replied:
‘If dainties now my taste regale,
To-morrow must those dainties fail.
This day departure I prefer
To all that wealth can minister.
O'er this fair land, no longer mine,
Which I, with all her realms, resign,
Her multitudes of men, her grain,
Her stores of wealth, let Bharat reign.
And let the promised boon which thou
Wast pleased to grant the queen ere now,
Be hers in full. Be true, O King,
Kind giver of each precious thing.
Thy spoken word I still will heed,
Obeying all thy lips decreed;
And fourteen years in woods will dwell
With those who live in glade and dell.
No hopes of power my heart can touch,
No selfish joys attract so much
As, son of Raghu, to fulfil
With heart and soul my father's will.
Dismiss, dismiss thy needless woe,
Nor let those drowning torrents flow:
The Lord of Rivers in his pride
Keeps to the banks that bar his tide.
Here in thy presence I declare;
By thy good deeds, thy truth, I swear;
Nor lordship, joy, nor lands I prize;
Life, heaven, all blessings I despise;
I wish to see thee still remain
Most true, O King, and free from stain.
It must not, Sire, it must not be:
I cannot rest one hour with thee.
Then bring this sorrow to an end,
For naught my settled will can bend.
I gave a pledge that binds me too,
And to that pledge I still am true.
Kaikeyi bade me speed away:
She prayed me, and I answered yea.
Pine not for me, and weep no more:
The wood for us has joy in store,
Filled with the wild deer's peaceful herds,
And voices of a thousand birds.
A father is the God of each,
Yea, e'en of Gods, so Scriptures teach:
And I will keep my sire's decree,
For as a God I honour thee.
O best of men, the time is nigh,
The fourteen years will soon pass by
And to thine eyes thy son restore:
Be comforted, and weep no more.
Thou with thy firmness shouldst support
These weeping crowds who throng the court;
Then why, O chief of high renown,
So troubled, and thy soul cast down?
Wild with the rage he could not calm,
Sumantra, grinding palm on palm,
His head in quick impatience shook,
And sighed with woe he could not brook.
He gnashed his teeth, his eyes were red,
From his changed face the colour fled.
In rage and grief that knew no law,
The temper of the king he saw.
With his word-arrows swift and keen
He shook the bosom of the queen.
With scorn, as though its lightning stroke
Would blast her body, thus he spoke:
‘Thou, who, of no dread sin afraid,
Hast Daśaratha’s self betrayed,
Lord of the world, whose might sustains
Each thing that moves or fixed remains,
What dire crime is left thee now?
Death to thy lord and house art thou,
Whose cruel deeds the king distress,
Mahendra’s peer in mightiness,
Firm as the mountain’s rooted steep,
Enduring as the Ocean’s deep.
Despise not Daśaratha, he
Is a kind lord and friend to thee.
A loving wife in worth outruns
The mother of ten million sons.
Kings, when their sires have passed away,
Succeed by birthright to the sway.
Ikshvákú’s son still rules the state,
Yet thou this rule wouldst violate.
Yea, let thy son, Kaikeyí, reign,
Let Bharat rule his sire’s domain.
Thy will, O Queen, shall none oppose:
We all will go where Ráma goes.
No Bráhman, scorning thee, will rest
Within the realm thou governest,
But all will fly indignant hence:
So great thy trespass and offence.
I marvel, when thy crime I see,
Earth yawns not quick to swallow thee;
And that the Bráhman saints prepare
No burning scourge thy soul to scare,
With cries of shame to smite thee, bent
Upon our Ráma’s banishment.
The Mango tree with axes fell,
And tend instead the Neem tree well.
Still watered with all care the tree
Will never sweet and pleasant be.
Thy mother’s faults to thee descend,
And with thy borrowed nature bleed.
True is the ancient saw: the Neem
Can ne’er distil a honeyed stream.
Taught by the tale of long ago
Thy mother’s hateful sin we know.
A bounteous saint, as all have heard,
A boon upon thy sire conferred,
And all the eloquence revealed
That fills the wood, the flood, the field.
No creature walked, or swam, or flew,
But he its varied language knew.
One morn upon his couch he heard
The chattering of a gorgeous bird,
And as he marked its close intent
He laughed aloud in merriment.
Thy mother furious with her lord,
And fain to perish by the cord,
Said to her husband: 'I would know,
O Monarch, why thou laughest so.'
The king in answer spake again:
'If I this laughter should explain,
This very hour would be my last,
For death, be sure, would follow fast.'
Again thy mother, flushed with ire,
To Kekaya spake, thy royal sire:
'Tell me the cause; then live or die:
I will not brook thy laugh, not I.'
Thus by his darling wife addressed,
The king whose might all earth confessed,
To that kind saint his story told
Who gave the wondrous gift of old.
He listened to the king's complaint,
And thus in answer spoke the saint:
'King, let her quit thy home or die,
But never with her prayer comply.'
The saint's reply his trouble stilled,
And all his heart with pleasure filled.
Thy mother from his home he sent,
And days like Lord Kuvera's spent.
So thou wouldst force the king, misled
By thee, in evil paths to tread,
And bent on evil wouldst begin,
Through folly, this career of sin.
Most true, methinks, in thee is shown
The ancient saw so widely known:
The sons their fathers' worth declare
And girls their mothers' nature-share.
So be not thou. For pity's sake
Accept the word the monarch spake.
Thy husband's will, O Queen, obey,
And be the people's hope and stay.
O, do not, urged by folly, draw
The king to tread on duty's law,
The lord who all the world sustains,
Bright as the God o'er Gods who reigns.
Our glorious king, by sin unstained,
Will never grant what fraud obtained;
No shade of fault in him is seen:
Let Ráma be anointed, Queen.
Remember, Queen, undying shame
Will through the world pursue thy name,
If Ráma leave the king his sire,
And, banished, to the wood retire.
Come, from thy breast this fever fling:
Of his own realm be Ráma king.
None in this city e'er can dwell
To tend and love thee half so well.
When Ráma sits in royal place,
True to the custom of his race
Our monarch of the mighty bow
A hermit to the woods will go.'

Sumantra thus, palm joined to palm,
Poured forth his words of bane and balm,
With keen reproach, with pleading kind,

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1. It was the custom of the kings of the solar dynasty to resign in their extreme old age the kingdom to the heir, and spend the remainder of their days in holy meditation in the forest:

2. For such through ages in their life's decline
   Is the good custom of Ikshváků's line.'

Raghuváníá,
Striving to move Kaikeyi's mind.
In vain he prayed, in vain reproved,
She heard unsoftened and unmoved.
Nor could the eyes that watched her view
One yielding look, one change of hue.
Ikshvákú's son with anguish torn
For the great oath his lips had sworn,
With tears and sighs of sharpest pain.
Thus to Sumantra spake again:
'Prepare thou quick a perfect force,
Cars, elephants, and foot, and horse,
To follow Raghu's scion hence
Equipped with all magnificence.
Let traders with the wealth they sell,
And those who charming stories tell,
And dancing-women fair of face,
The prince's ample chariots grace.
On all the train who throng his courts,
And those who share his manly sports,
Great gifts of precious wealth bestow,
And bid them with their master go.
Let noble arms, and many a wain,
And townsmen swell the prince's train;
And hunters best for woodland skill
Their places in the concourse fill.
While elephants and deer he slays,
Drinking wood honey as he strays,
And looks on streams each fairer yet,
His kingdom he may chance forget.
Let all my gold and wealth of corn
With Ráma to the wilds be borne;
For it will soothe the exile's lot
To sacrifice in each pure spot,
Deal ample largess forth, and meet
Each hermit in his calm retreat.
The wealth shall Ráma with him bear:
Ayodhyá shall be Bharat’s share.’

As thus Kakutstha’s offspring spoke,
Fear in Kaikeyí’s breast awoke.
The freshness of her face was dried,
Her trembling tongue was terror-tied.
Alarmed and sad, with bloodless cheek,
She turned to him and scarce could speak:
‘Nay, Sire, but Bharat shall not gain
An empty realm where none remain.
My Bharat shall not rule a waste
Reft of all sweets to charm the taste—
The wine-cup’s dregs, all dull and dead,
Whence the light foam and life are fled.’

Thus in her rage the long-eyed dame
Spoke her dire speech untouched by shame.
Then, answering, Daśaratha spoke:
‘Why, having bowed me to the yoke,
Dost thou, most cruel, spur and goad
Me who am struggling with the load?
Why didst thou not oppose at first
This hope, vile Queen, so fondly nursed?’

Scarce could the monarch’s angry speech
The ears of the fair lady reach,
When thus, with double wrath inflamed,
Kaikeyí to the king exclaimed:

‘Sagar, from whom thy line is traced,
Drove forth his eldest son disgraced,
Called Asamanj, whose fate we know:
Thus should thy son to exile go.’

‘Fie on thee, dame!’ the monarch said;
Each of her people bent his head,
And stood in shame and sorrow mute:
She marked not, bold and resolute.
Then great Siddhárth, inflamed with rage,
The good old councillor and sage
On whose wise rede the king relied,
To Queen Kaikeyi thus replied:
‘But Asamanj the cruel laid
His hands on infants as they played,
Cast them to Sarjú’s flood, and smiled
For pleasure when he drowned a child.’
The people saw, and, furious, sped
Straight to the king his sire and said:
‘Choose us, O glory of the throne,
Choose us, or Asamanj alone.’
‘Whence comes this dread?’ the monarch cried;
And all the people thus replied:
‘In folly, King, he loves to lay
Fierce hands upon our babes at play,
Casts them to Sarjú’s flood, and joys
To murder our bewildered boys.’
With heedful ear the king of men
Heard each complaining citizen.
To please their troubled minds he strove,
And from the state his son he drove.
With wife and gear upon a car
He placed him quick, and sent him far.

1 See Book I., Canto XXXIX. An Indian prince in more modern times appears to have diverted himself in a similar way.

It is still reported in Belgaum that Appay Dassy was wont to amuse himself by making several young and beautiful women stand side by side on a narrow balcony, without a parapet, overhanging the deep reservoir in the new palace in Nipani. He used then to pass along the line of trembling creatures, and suddenly thrusting one of them headlong into the water below, he used to watch her drowning, and derive pleasure from her dying agonies.”—History of the Belgaum District. By H. J. Stokes, M. S. C.
And thus he gave commandment, ‘He
Shall all his days an exile be.’
With basket and with plough he strayed
O’er mountain heights, through pathless shade,
Roaming all lands a weary time,
An outcast wretch defiled with crime.
Sagar, the righteous path who held,
His wicked offspring thus expelled.
But what has Ráma done to blame?
Why should his sentence be the same?
No sin his stainless name can dim;
We see no fault at all in him.
Pure as the moon, no darkening blot
On his sweet life has left a spot.
If thou canst see one fault, c’en one,
To dim the fame of Raghu’s son,
That fault this hour, O lady, show,
And Ráma to the wood shall go.
To drive the guiltless to the wild,
Truth’s constant lover, undefiled,
Would, by defiance of the right,
The glory c’eu of Indra blight.
Then cease, O lady, and dismiss
Thy hope to ruin Ráma’s bliss,
Or all thy gain, O fair of face,
Will be men’s hatred, and disgrace.’
CANTO XXXVII.

THE COATS OF BÁRK.

Thus spake the virtuous sage; and then Ráma addressed the king of men,
In laws of meek behaviour bred,
Thus to his sire he meekly said:

‘King, I renounce all earthly care,
And live in woods on woodland fare.
What, dead to joys, have I to do
With lordly train and retinue?
Who gives his elephant and yet
Upon the girths his heart will set?
How can a cord attract his eyes
Who gives away the nobler prize?
Best of the good, with me be led
No host, my King, with banners spread.
All wealth, all lordship I resign:
The hermit’s dress alone be mine.
Before I go, have here conveyed
A little basket and a spade.
With these alone I go, content,
For fourteen years of banishment.’

With her own hands Kaikeyí took
The hermit coats of bark, and, ‘Look,’
She cried with bold unblushing brow
Before the concourse, ‘Dress thee now.’
That lion leader of the brave
Took from her hand the dress she gave,
Cast his fine raiment on the ground,
And round his waist the vesture bound,
Then quick the hero Lakshman too
His garment from his shoulders threw,
And, in the presence of his sire,
Indued the ascetic's rough attire.
But Sita, in her silks arrayed,
Threw glances, trembling and afraid,
On the bark coat she had to wear,
Like a shy doe that eyes the snare.
Ashamed and weeping for distress
From the queen's hand she took the dress.
The fair one, by her husband's side
Who matched heaven's minstrel monarch, cried:
'How bind they on their woodland dress,
Those hermits of the wilderness?'

There stood the pride of Janak's race
Perplexed, with sad appealing face.
One coat the lady's fingers grasped,
One round her neck she feebly clasped,
But failed again, again, confused
By the wild garb she ne'er had used.
Then quickly hastening Rama, pride
Of all who cherish virtue, tied
The rough bark mantle on her, o'er
The silken raiment that she wore.

Then the sad women when thy saw
Rama the choice bark round her draw,
Rained water from each tender eye,
And cried aloud with bitter cry:
'O, hot on her, beloved, not
On Sita falls thy mournful lot.
If, faithful to thy father's will,
Thou must go forth, leave Sita still.'

1 Chitraratha, King of the celestial choristers.
Let Sítá still remaining here
Our hearts with her loved presence cheer.
With Láksmana by thy side to aid
Seek thou, dear son, the lonely shade.
Unmeet, one good and fair as she
Should dwell in woods a devotee.
Let not our prayers be prayed in vain:
Let beauteous Sítá yet remain;
For by thy love of duty tied
Thou wilt not here thyself abide.

Then the king's venerable guide
Vaśishtha, when he saw each coat
Enclose the lady's waist and throat,
Her zeal with gentle words repressed,
And Queen Káikeyí thus addressed:
'O evil-hearted sinner, shame
Of royal Kékaya's race and name;
Who matchless in thy sin couldst cheat
Thy lord the king with vile deceit;
Lost to all sense of duty, know
Sítá to exile shall not go.
Sítá shall guard, as 'twere her own,
The precious trust of Ráma's throne.
Those joined by wedlock's sweet control
Have but one self and common soul.
Thus Sítá shall our empress be,
For Ráma's self and soul is she.
Or if she still to Ráma cleave
And for the woods the kingdom leave:
If naught her loving heart deter,
We and this town will follow her.
The warders of the queen shall take
Their wives and go for Ráma's sake.
The nation with its stores of grain,
The city's wealth shall swell his train.
Bharat, Satrughna both will wear
Bark mantles, and his lodging share,
Still with their elder brother dwell
In the wild wood, and serve him well.
Rest here alone, and rule thy state
Unpeopled, barren, desolate;
Be empress of the land and trees,
Thou sinner whom our sorrows please.
The land which Ráma reigns not o'er
Shall bear the kingdom's name no more:
The woods which Ráma wanders through
Shall be our home and kingdom too.
Bharat, be sure, will never deign
O'er realms his father yields, to reign.
Nay, if the king's true son he be,
He will not, sonlike, dwell with thee.
Nay, shouldst thou from the earth arise,
And send thy message from the skies,
To his forefathers' custom true
No erring course would he pursue.
So hast thou, by thy grievous fault,
Offended him thou wouldst exalt.
In all the world none draws his breath
Who loves not Ráma, true to death.
This day, O Queen, shalt thou behold
Birds, deer, and beasts from lea and fold
Turn to the woods in Ráma's train,
And naught save longing trees remain.'
CANTO XXXVIII.

CARE FOR KAUSALYÁ.

Then when the people wroth and sad
Saw Sítá in bark vesture clad,
Though wedded, like some widowed thing,
They cried out, 'Shame upon thee, King!'
Grieved by their cry and angry look
The lord of earth at once forsok
All hope in life that still remained,
In duty, self, and fame unstained.
Ikshváku's son with burning sighs
On Queen Kaikeyí bent his eyes,
And said: 'But Sítá must not flee
In garments of a devotee.
My holy guide has spoken truth:
Unfit is she in tender youth,
So gently nurtured, soft and fair,
The hardships of the wood to share.
How has she sinned, devout and true,
   The noblest monarch's child,
That she should garb of bark indue
   And journey to the wild?
That she should spend her youthful days
   Amid a hermit band,
Like some poor mendicant who strays
   Sore troubled, through the land?
Ah, let the child of Janak throw
   Her dress of bark aside,
And let the royal lady go
With royal wealth supplied.
Not such the pledge I gave before,
Unfit to linger here:
The oath which I the sinner swore
Is kept, and leaves her clear.
Won from her childlike love this too
My instant death would be,
As blossoms on the old bamboo
Destroy the parent tree.¹

If aught amiss by Ráma done
Offend thee, O thou wicked one,
What least transgression canst thou find
In her, thou worst of womankind?
What shade of fault in her appears,
Whose full soft eye is like the deer’s?
What canst thou blame in Janak’s child,
So gentle, modest, true, and mild?
Is not one crime complete, that sent
My Ráma forth to banishment?
And wilt thou other sins commit,
Thou wicked one, to double it?
This is the pledge and oath I swore,
What thou besoughtest, and no more,
Of Ráma—for I heard thee, dame—
When he for consecration came.
Now with this limit not content,
In hell should be thy punishment,
Who fain the Maithil bride wouldst press
To clothe her limbs with hermit dress.¹

Thus spake the father in his woe;
And Ráma, still prepared to go,
To him who sat with drooping head

¹ It is said that the bamboo dies after flowering.
Spake in return these words and said:

'Just King, here stands my mother dear,
Kauñālyā, one whom all revere.
Submissive, gentle, old is she,
And keeps her lips from blame of thee.
For her, kind lord, of me bereft
A sea of whelming woe is left.
O, show her in her new distress
Still fonder love and tenderness.
Well honoured by thine honoured hand
Her grief for me let her withstand,
Who wrapt in constant thought of me
In me would live a devotee.

Peer of Mahendra, O, to her be kind,

And treat I pray, my gentle mother so,
That, when I dwell afar, her life resigned,
She may not pass to Yama's realm for woe.'
CANTO XXXIX.

COUNSEL TO SITÄ.

Scarce had the sire, with each dear queen,
Heard Ráma’s pleading voice, and seen
His darling in his hermit dress
Ere failed his senses for distress.
Convulsed with woe, his soul that shook,
On Baghu’s son he could not look;
Or if he looked with failing eye
He could not to the chief reply.
By pangs of bitter grief assailed,
The long-armed monarch wept and wailed,
Half dead a while and sore distraught,
While Ráma filled his every thought.
‘This hand of mine in days ere now
Has reft her young from many a cow,
Or living things has idly slain;
Hence comes, I ween, this hour of pain.
Not till the hour is come to die
Can from its shell the spirit fly.
Death comes not, and Kaikeyí still
Torments the wretch she cannot kill,
Who sees his son before him quit
The fine soft robes his rank that fit,
And, glorious as the burning fire,
In hermit garb his limbs attire.
Now all the people grieve and groan;
Through Queen Kaikeyí’s deed alone,
Who, having dared this deed of sin,
Strives for herself the gain to win.'

He spoke. With tears his eyes grew dim,
His senses all deserted him.
He cried, O Ráma, once, then weak
And fainting could no further speak.
Unconscious there he lay: at length
Regathering his sense and strength,
While his full eyes their torrents shed,
To wise Sumantra thus he said:
'Yoke the light car, and hither lead
Fleet coursers of the noblest breed,
And drive this heir of lofty fate
Beyond the limit of the state.
This seems the fruit that virtues bear,
The meed of worth which texts declare—
The sending of the brave and good
By sire and mother to the wood.'

He heard the monarch, and obeyed,
With ready feet that ne'er delayed,
And brought before the palace gate
The horses and the car of state.
Then to the monarch's son he sped,
And raising hands of reverence said
That the light car which gold made fair,
With best of steeds, was standing there.
King Dásaratha called in haste
The lord o'er all his treasures placed,
And spoke, well skilled in place and time,
His will to him devoid of crime:
'Count all the years she has to live
Afar in forest wilds, and give
To Sítá robes and gems of price
As for the time may well suffice.'
Quick to the treasure-room he went,
Charged by that king most excellent,
Brought the rich stores, and gave them all
To Sítá in the monarch's hall.
The Maithil dame of high descent
Received each robe and ornament,
And tricked those limbs, whose lines foretold
High destiny, with gems and gold.
So well adorned, so fair to view,
A glory through the hall she threw:
So, when the Lord of Light upsprings,
His radiance o'er the sky he flings.
Then Queen Kauśalyá spake at last,
With loving arms about her cast,
Pressed lingering kisses on her head,
And to the high-souled lady said:
'Ah, in this faithless world below
When dark misfortune comes and woe,
Wives, loved and cherished every day,
Neglect their lords and disobey.
Yes, woman's nature still is this:—
After long days of calm and bliss
When some light grief her spirit tries,
She changes all her love, or flies.
Young wives are thankless, false in soul,
With roving hearts that spurn control,
Brooding on sin and quickly changed,
In one short hour their love estranged.
Not glorious deed or lineage fair,
Not knowledge, gift, or tender care
In chains of lasting love can bind
A woman's light inconstant mind.
But those good dames who still maintain
What right, truth, Scripture, rule ordain—
No holy thing in their pure eyes
With one beloved husband vies,
Nor let thy lord my son, condemned
To exile, be by thee contemned,
For be he poor or wealthy, he
Is as a God, dear child, to thee.'

When Sītā heard Kaūśalyā’s speech
Her duty and her gain to teach,
She joined her palms with reverent grace,
And gave her answer face to face:
‘All will I do, forgetting naught,
Which thou, O honoured Queen, hast taught.
I know, have heard, and deep have stored
The rules of duty to my lord.
Not me, good Queen, shouldst thou include
Among the faithless multitude.
Its own sweet light the moon shall leave
Ere I to duty cease to cleave.
The stringless lute gives forth no strain,
The wheelless car is urged in vain:
No joy a lordless dame, although
Blest with a hundred sons, can know.
From father, brother, and from son
A measured share of joy is won:
Who would not honour, love, and bless
Her lord, whose gifts are measureless?
Thus trained to think, I hold in awe
Scripture’s command and duty’s law.
Him can I hold in slight esteem?
Her lord is woman’s God, I deem.’
Kaūśalyā heard the lady’s speech,
Nor failed those words her heart to reach.
Then, pure in mind, she gave to flow
The tear that sprang of joy and woe.
Then duteous Rāma forward came
And stood before the honoured dame,  
And joining reverent hands addressed  
The queen in rank above the rest:  
‘O mother, from these tears refrain;  
Look on my sire and still thy pain.  
To thee my days afar shall fly  
As if sweet slumber closed thine eye,  
And fourteen years of exile seem  
To thee, dear mother, like a dream.  
On me returning safe and well,  
Girt by my friends, thine eyes shall dwell.’

Thus for their deep affection’s sake  
The hero to his mother spake,  
Then to the half seven hundred too,  
Wives of his sire, paid reverence due.  
Thus Daśaratha’s son addressed  
That crowd of matrons sore distressed:  
‘If from these lips, while here I dwelt,  
One heedless taunt you e’er have felt,  
Forgive me, pray. And now adieu,  
I bid good-bye to all of you.’

Then straight, like curlews’ cries, upwent  
The voices of their wild lament,  
While, as he bade farewell, the crowd  
Of royal women wept aloud.  
And through the ample hall’s extent,  
Where erst the sound of tabour, blent  
With drum and shrill-toned instrument,  
In joyous concert rose,  
Now rang the sound of wailing high,  
The lamentation and the cry,  
The shriek, the choking sob, the sigh  
That told the ladies’ woes.
CANTO XL.

RÁMA'S DEPARTURE.

Then Ráma, Sítá, Lakshman bent
At the king's feet, and sadly went
Round him with slow steps reverent.
When Ráma of the duteous heart
Had gained his sire's consent to part,
With Sítá by his side he paid
Due reverence to the queen dismayed.
And Lakshman, with affection meet,
Bowed down and clasped his mother's feet.
Sumitrá viewed him as he pressed
Her feet, and thus her son addressed:
'Neglect not Ráma wandering there,
But tend him with thy faithful care.
In hours of wealth, in time of woe,
Him, sinless son, thy refuge know.
From this good law the just ne'er swerve,
That younger sons the eldest serve,
And to this righteous rule incline
All children of thine ancient line—
Freely to give, reward each rite,
Nor spare their bodies in the fight.
Let Ráma Daśaratha be,
Look upon Sítá as on me,
And let the cot wherein you dwell
Be thine Ayodhyá. Fare thee well.'
Her blessing thus Sumitrá gave
To him whose soul to Ráma clave,
Canto XL. THE RAMAYAN.

Exclaiming, when her speech was done,
'Go forth, O Lakshman, go, my son.
Go forth, my son, to win success,
High victory and happiness.
Go forth thy foemen to destroy,
And turn again at last with joy.'

As Mátali his charioteer
Speaks for the Lord of Gods to hear,
Sumantra, palm to palm applied,
In reverence trained, to Ráma cried:
'O famous Prince, my car ascend,—
May blessings on thy course attend,—
And swiftly shall my horses flee
And place thee where thou biddest me.
The fourteen years thou hast to stay
Far in the wilds, begin to-day;
For Queen Kaikeyí cries, Away.'

Then Sítá, best of womankind,
Ascended, with a tranquil mind,
Soon as her toilet task was done,
That chariot brilliant as the sun.
Ráma and Lakshman true and bold
Sprang on the car adorned with gold.
The king those years had counted o'er,
And given Sítá robes and store
Of precious ornaments to wear
When following her husband there.
The brothers in the car found place
For nets and weapons of the chase,
There warlike arms and mail they laid,
A leathern basket and a spade.
Soon as Sumantra saw the three
Were seated in the chariot, he
Urged on each horse of noble breed,
Who matched the rushing wind in speed.
As thus the son of Raghu went
Forth for his dreary banishment,
Chill numbing grief the town assailed,
All strength grew weak, all spirit failed.
Ayodhya through her wide extent
Was filled with tumult and lament:
Steeds neighed and shook the bells they bore,
Each elephant returned a roar.
Then all the city, young and old,
Wild with their sorrow uncontrolled,
Rushed to the car, as, from the sun
The panting herds to water run:
Before the car, behind, they clung,
And there as eagerly they hung,
With torrents streaming from their eyes,
Called loudly with repeated cries:
"Listen, Sumantra; draw thy rein;
Drive gently, and thy steeds restrain.
Once more on Rama will we gaze,
Now to be lost for many days.
The queen his mother has, be sure,
A heart of iron, to endure
To see her godlike Rama go,
Nor feel it shattered by the blow.
Sita, well done! Videha's pride,
Still like his shadow by his side;
Rejoicing in thy duty still
As sunlight cleaves to Meru's hill.
Thou, Lakshman, too, hast well deserved,
Who from thy duty hast not swerved,
Tending the peer of Gods above,
Whose lips speak naught but words of love.
Thy firm resolve is nobly great,
And high success on thee shall wait.
Yea, thou shalt win a priceless meed—
Thy path with him to heaven shall lead.'
As thus they spake, they could not hold
The tears that down their faces rolled,
While still they followed for a space
Their darling of Ikshváku's race.

There stood surrounded by a ring
Of mournful wives the mournful king;
For, 'I will see once more,' he cried,
'Mine own dear son,' and forth he hied.
As he came near, there rose the sound
Of weeping, as the dames stood round.
So the she-elephants complain
When their great lord and guide is slain.
Kakutstha's son, the king of men,
The glorious sire, looked troubled then,
As the full moon is when dismayed
By dark eclipse's threatening shade.
Then Daśaratha's son, designed
For highest fate, of lofty mind,
Urged to more speed the charioteer,
'Away, away! why linger here?
Urged on thy horses,' Ráma cried,
And 'Stay, O stay,' the people sighed.
Sumantra, urged to speed away,
The townsmen's call must disobey.
Forth as the long-armed hero went,
The dust his chariot wheels up sent
Was laid by streams that ever flowed
From their sad eyes who filled the road.
Then, sprung of woe, from eyes of all
The women drops began to fall,
As from each lotus on the lake
The darting fish the water shake.
When he, the king of high renown,
Saw that one thought held all the town,
Like some tall tree he fell and lay,
Whose root the axe has hewn away.
Then straight a mighty cry from those
Who followed Ráma’s car arose,
Who saw their monarch fainting there
Beneath that grief too great to bear.
Then ‘Ráma, Ráma!’ with the cry
Of ‘Ah, his mother!’ sounded high,
As all the people wept aloud
Around the ladies’ sorrowing crowd.
When Ráma backward turned his eye,
And saw the king his father lie
With troubled sense and failing limb,
And the sad queen, who followed him,
Like some young creature in the net,
That will not, in its misery, let
Its wild eyes on its mother rest,
So, by the bonds of duty pressed,
His mother’s look he could not meet.
He saw them with their weary feet,
Who, used to bliss, in cars should ride,
Who ne’er by sorrow should be tried,
And, as one mournful look he cast,
‘Drive on,’ he cried, ‘Sumantra, fast.’
As when the driver’s torturing hook
Goads on an elephant, the look
Of sire and mother in despair
Was more than Ráma’s heart could bear.
As mother kine to stalls return
Which hold the calves for whom they yearn,
So to the car she tried to run
As a cow seeks her little one,  
Once and again the hero’s eyes  
Looked on his mother, as with cries  
Of woe she called and gestures wild,  
‘O Sítá, Lakshman, O my child!’  
‘Stay,’ cried the king, ‘thy chariot stay:’  
‘On on,’ cried Ráma, ‘speed away.’  
As one between two hosts, inclined  
To neither was Sumantra’s mind.  
But Ráma spake these words again:  
‘A lengthened woe is bitterest pain.  
On, on; and if his wrath grow hot,  
Thine answer be, ‘I heard thee not.’  
Sumantra, at the chief’s behest,  
Dismissed the crowd that toward him pressed,  
And, as he bade, to swiftest speed  
Urged on his way each willing steed.  
The king’s attendants parted thence,  
And paid him heart-felt reverence:  
In mind, and with the tears he wept,  
Each still his place near Ráma kept.  
As swift away the horses sped,  
His lords to Daśaratha said:  
‘To follow him whom thou again  
Wouldst see returning home is vain.’  
With failing limb and drooping mien  
He heard their counsel wise:  
Still on their son the king and queen  
Kept fast their lingering eyes.  

‘Thirty centuries have passed since he began this memorable journey. Every step of it is known and is annually traversed by thousands: hero-worship is not extinct. What can Faith do! How strong are the ties of religion when entwined with the legends of a country! How many a cart creeps creaking and weary along the road from Ayodhyá to Chitrakúṭ. It is this that gives the Ráma-yána a strange interest: the story still lives.’  
Calcutta Review, Vol. XXIII.
The lion chief with hands upraised
Was born from eyes that fondly gazed.
But then the ladies’ bower was rent
With cries of weeping and lament:
‘Where goes he now, our lord, the sure
Protector of the friendless poor,
In whom the wretched and the weak
Defence and aid were wont to seek?
All words of wrath he turned aside,
And ne’er, when cursed, in ire replied.
He shared his people’s woe, and stilled
The troubled breast which rage had filled.
Our chief, on lofty thoughts intent,
In glorious fame preëminent:
As on his own dear mother, thus
He ever looked on each of us.
Where goes he now? His sire’s behest,
By Queen Kaikeyi’s guile distressed,
Has banished to the forest hence
Him who was all the world’s defence.
Ah, senseless King, to drive away
The hope of men, their guard and stay,
To banish to the distant wood
Râma the duteous, true, and good!
The royal dames, like cows bereaved
Of their young calves, thus sadly grieved.
The monarch heard them as thy wailed,
And by the fire of grief assailed
Canto XLI.  THE RAMAYAN.

For his dear son, he bowed his head,
And all his sense and memory fled.
Then were no fires of worship fed,
Thick darkness o'er the sun was spread.
The cows their thirsty calves denied,
And elephants flung their food aside.
Triśanku,¹ Jupiter looked dread,
And Mercury and Mars the red,
In direful opposition met,
The glory of the moon beset.
The lunar stars withheld their light,
The planets were no longer bright,
But meteors with their horrid glare,
And dire Viśákhás² lit the air.
As troubled Ocean heaves and raves
When Doom's wild tempest sweeps the waves,
Thus all Ayodhyā reeled and bent
When Rāma to the forest went.
And chilling grief and dark despair
Fell suddenly on all men there.
Their wonted pastime all forgot,
Nor thought of food, or touched it not.
Crowds in the royal street were seen
With weeping eye and troubled mien:
No more a people gay and glad,
Each head and heart was sick and sad.
No more the cool wind softly blew,
The moon no more was fair to view.
No more the sun with genial glow
Cherished the world now plunged in woe.
Sons, brothers, husbands, wedded wives
Forgot the ties that joined their lives;

¹ See Vol. I. p. 256.
² Four stars of the sixteenth lunar asterism.
No thought for kith and kin was spared,
But all for only Ráma cared.
And Ráma's friends who loved him best,
Their minds disordered and distressed
By the great burthen of their woes
Turned not to slumber or repose.
Like Earth with all her hills bereft
    Of Índra's guiding care,
Ayodhya in her sorrow left
    By him, the high-souled heir,
Was bowed by fear and sorrow's force,
    And shook with many a throe,
While warrior, elephant, and horse
    Sent up the cry of woe.
CANTO XLII.

DAŚARATHA'S LAMENT.

While yet the dust was seen afar
That marked the course of Ráma's car,
The glory of Ikshváku's race
Turned not away his eager face.
While yet his duteous son he saw
He could not once his gaze withdraw,
But rooted to the spot remained
With eyes that after Ráma strained.
But when that dust no more he viewed,
Fainting he fell by grief subdued.
To his right hand Kauśalyá went,
And ready aid the lady lent,
While Bharat's loving mother tried
To raise him on the other side.
The king, within whose ordered soul
Justice and virtue held control,
To Queen Kaikeyí turned and said,
With every sense disquieted:
'Touch me not, thou whose soul can plot
All sin, Kaikeyí, touch me not.
No loving wife, no friend to me,
I ne'er again would look on thee;
Ne'er from this day have aught to do
With thee and all thy retinue;
Thee whom no virtuous thoughts restrain,
Whose selfish heart seeks only gain.
The hand I laid in mine, O dame,
The steps we took around the flame, ¹
And all that links thy life to mine
Here and hereafter I resign.
If Bharat too, thy darling son,
Joy in the rule thy art has won,
Ne'er may the funeral offerings paid
By his false hand approach my shade.'

Then while the dust upon him hung,
The monarch to Kausalya clung,
And she with mournful steps and slow
Turned to the palace, worn with woe.
As one whose hand has touched the fire,
Or slain a Brāhmaṇa in his ire,
He felt his heart with sorrow torn
Still thinking of his son forlorn.
Each step was torture, as the road
The traces of the chariot showed,
And as the shadowed sun grows dim
So care and anguish darkened him.
He raised a cry, by woe distraught,
As of his son again he thought,
And judging that the car had sped
Beyond the city, thus he said:
'I still behold the foot-prints made
By the good horses that conveyed
My son afar: these marks I see,
But high-souled Rāma, where is he?
Ah me, my son! my first and best,
On pleasant couches wont to rest,
With limbs perfumed with sandal, fanned
By many a beauty's tender hand:

¹ In the marriage service.
Where will he lie with log or stone
Beneath him for a pillow thrown,
To leave at morn his earthy bed,
Neglected, and with dust o'erspread,
As from the flood with sigh and pant
Comes forth the husband elephant?
The men who make the woods their home
Shall see the long-armed hero roam
Roused from his bed, though lord of all,
In semblance of a friendless thrall.
Janak's dear child who ne'er has met
With aught save joy and comfort yet,
Will reach to-day the forest, worn
And wearied with the brakes of thorn.
Ah, gentle girl, of woods unskilled,
How will her heart with dread be filled
At the wild beasts' deep roaring there,
Whose voices lift the shuddering hair!
Kaikeyi, glory in thy gain,
And, widow queen, begin to reign:
No will, no power to live have I
When my brave son no more is nigh.'

Thus pouring forth laments, the king
Girt by the people's crowded ring,
Entered the noble bower like one
New-bathed when funeral rites are done.
Where'er he looked naught met his gaze
But empty houses, courts, and ways.
Closed were the temples: countless feet
No longer trod the royal street,
And thinking of his son he viewed
Men weak and worn and woe-subdued.
As sinks the sun into a cloud,
So passed he on, and wept aloud,
Within that house no more to be
The dwelling of the banished three,
Brave Ráma, his Videhan bride,
And Lakshman by his brother's side:
Like broad still waters, when the king
Of all the birds that ply the wing
Has swooped from heaven and borne away
The glittering snakes that made them gay.
With choking sobs and voice half spent
The king renewed his sad lament:
With broken utterance faint and low
Scarce could he speak these words of woe:
'My steps to Ráma's mother guided,
And place me by Kauśalyá's side:
There, only there my heart may know
Some little respite from my woe.'

The warders of the palace led
The monarch, when his words were said,
To Queen Kauśalyá's bower, and there
Laid him with reverential care.
But while he rested on the bed
Still was his soul disquieted.
In grief he tossed his arms on high
Lamenting with a piteous cry:
'O Ráma, Ráma,' thus said he,
'My son, thou hast forsaken me.
High bliss awaits those favoured men
Left living in Ayodhyá then,
Whose eyes shall see my son once more
Returning when the time is o'er.'
Then came the night, whose hated gloom
Fell on him like the night of doom.
At midnight Daśaratha cried
To Queen Kauśalyá by his side:
Canto XLII.  THE RAMAYAN.  149

‘I see thee not, Kausalyá; lay
Thy gentle hand in mine, I pray.
When Ráma left his home my sight
Went with him, nor returns to-night.’
CANTO XLIII.

KAUŚALYÁ'S LAMENT.

Kauśalyá saw the monarch lie
With drooping frame and failing eye,
And for her banished son distressed
With these sad words her lord addressed:
'Kaikeyí, cruel, false, and vile
Has cast the venom of her guile
On Ráma lord of men, and she
Will ravage like a snake set free;
And more and more my soul alarm,
Like a dire serpent bent on harm.
For triumph crowns each dark intent,
And Ráma to the wild is sent.
Ah, were he doomed but here to stray
Begging his food from day to day,
Or do, enslaved, Kaikeyí's will,
This were a boon, a comfort still.
But she, as chase her cruel hate,
Has hurled him from his high estate,
As Bráhmans when the moon is new
Cast to the ground the demons' due.¹
The long-armed hero, like the lord
Of Nágas, with his bow and sword
Begins, I ween, his forest life
With Lakshman and his faithful wife.
Ah, how will fare the exiles now,
Whom, moved by Queen Kaikeyí, thou

¹ The husks and chaff of the rice offered to the Gods.
Hast sent in forests to abide,
Bred in delights, by woe untried?
Far banished when their lives are young,
With the fair fruit before them hung,
Deprived of all their rank that suits,
How will they live on grain and roots?
O, that my years of woe were passed,
And the glad hour were come at last
When I shall see my children dear,
Ráma, his wife, and Lakshman here!
When shall Ayodhyá, wild with glee,
Again those mighty heroes see,
And decked with wreaths her banners wave
To welcome home the true and brave?
When will the beautiful city view
With happy eyes the lordly two
Returning, joyful as the main
When the dear moon is full again?
When, like some mighty bull who leads
The cow exulting through the meads,
Will Ráma through the city ride,
Strong-armed; with Sítá at his side?
When will ten thousand thousand meet
And crowd Ayodhyá’s royal street,
And grain in joyous welcome throw
Upon my sons who tame the foe?
When with delight shall youthful bands
Of Bráhman maidens in their hands
Bear fruit and flowers in goodly show,
And circling round Ayodhyá go?
With ripened judgment of a sage,
And godlike in his blooming age,
When shall my virtuous son appear,
Like kindly rain, our hearts to cheer?
Ah, in a former life, I ween,
This hand of mine, most base and mean,
Has dried the udders of the kine
And left the thirsty calves to pine.
Hence, as the lion robs the cow,
Kaikeyi makes me childless now,
Exulting from her feebler foe
To rend the son she cherished so.
I had but him, in Scripture skilled,
With every grace his soul was filled.
Now not a joy has life to give,
And robbed of him I would not live;
Yea, all my days are dark and drear
If he, my darling, be not near,
And Lakshman brave, my heart to cheer.
As for my son I mourn and yearn,
The quenchless flames of anguish burn
And kill me with the pain,
As in the summer's noontide blaze
The glorious Day-God with his rays
Consumes the parching plain.'
CANTO XLIV.

Sumitrá's Speech.

Kausalyá ceased her sad lament,
Of beauiteous dames most excellent.
Sumitrá, who to duty clave,
In righteous words this answer gave:
' Dear Queen, all noble virtues grace
Thy son, of men the first in place.
Why dost thou shed these tears of woe
With bitter grief lamenting so?
If Ráma, leaving royal sway
Has hastened to the woods away,
'Tis for his high-souled father's sake
That he his promise may not break.
He to the path of duty clings
Which lordly fruit hereafter brings—
The path to which the righteous cleave—
For him, dear Queen, thou shouldst not grieve.
And Lakshman too, the blameless-souled,
The same high course with him will hold,
And mighty bliss on him shall wait,
So tenderly compassionate.
And Sítá, bred with tender care,
Well knows what toils await her there,
But in her love she will not part
From Ráma of the virtuous heart.
Now has thy son through all the world
The banner of his fame unfurled:
True, modest, careful of his vow,
What has he left to aim at now?  
The sun will mark his mighty soul,  
His wisdom, sweetness, self-control,  
Will spare from pain his face and limb,  
And with soft radiance shine for him.  
For him through forest glades shall spring  
A soft auspicious breeze, and bring  
Its tempered heat and cold to play  
Around him ever night and day.  
The pure cold moonbeams shall delight  
The hero as he sleeps at night,  
And soothe him with the soft caress  
Of a fond parent's tenderness.  
To him, the bravest of the brave,  
His heavenly arms the Bráhmans gave,  
When fierce Suválu dyed the plain  
With his life-blood by Ráma slain.  
Still trusting to his own right arm.  
Thy hero son will fear no harm:  
As in his father's palace, he  
In the wild woods will dauntless be.  
Whene'er he lets his arrows fly  
His stricken foemen fall and die:  
And is that prince of peerless worth  
Too weak to keep and sway the earth?  
His sweet pure soul, his beauty's charm,  
His hero heart, his warlike arm,  
Will soon redeem his rightful reign  
When from the woods he comes again.  
The Bráhmans on the prince's head  
King-making drops shall quickly shed,  
And Sítá, Earth, and Fortune share  
The glories which await the heir.  
For him, when forth his chariot swept,
The crowd that thronged Ayodhya wept,
With agonizing woe distressed.
With him in hermit's mantle dressed
In guise of Sita Lakshmi went,
And none his glory may prevent.
Yea, naught to him is high or hard,
Before whose steps, to be his guard,
Lakshmana, the best who draws the bow,
With spear, shaft, sword rejoiced to go.
His wanderings in the forest o'er,
Thine eyes shall see thy son once more.
Quit thy faint heart, thy grief dispel,
For this, O Queen, is truth I tell.
Thy son returning, moonlike, thence,
Shall at thy feet do reverence,
And, blest and blameless lady, thou
Shalt see his head to touch them bow.
Yea, thou shalt see thy son made king
When he returns with triumphing,
And how thy happy eyes will brim
With tears of joy to look on him!
Thou, blameless lady, shouldst the whole
Of the sad people here console:
Why in thy tender heart allow
This bitter grief to harbour now?
As the long banks of cloud distil
Their water when they see the hill,
So shall the drops of rapture run
From thy glad eyes to see thy son
Returning, as he lowly bends
To greet thee, girt by all his friends.'

Thus soothing, kindly eloquent,
With every hopeful argument
Kausalya's heart by sorrow rent,
Fair Queen Sumitrá ceased.
Kausalyá heard each pleasant plea,
And grief began to leave her free,
As the light clouds of autumn flee,
Their watery stores decreased.
CANTO XLV.

THE TAMASÁ.

Their tender love the people drew
To follow Ráma brave and true,
The high-souled hero, as he went
Forth from his home to banishment.
The king himself his friends obeyed;
And turned him homeward as they prayed.
But yet the people turned not back,
Still close on Ráma's chariot track.
For they who in Ayodhya dwelt
For him such fond affection felt,
Decked with all grace and glories high,
The dear full moon of every eye.
Though much his people prayed and wept,
Kakutstha's son his purpose kept,
And still his journey would pursue
To keep the king his father true.
Deep in the hero's bosom sank
Their love, whose signs his glad eye drank.
He spoke to cheer them, as his own
Dear children, in a loving tone:
‘If ye would grant my fond desire,
Give Bharat now that love entire
And reverence shown to me by all
Who dwell within Ayodhya's wall.
For he, Kaikeyi's darling son,
His virtuous career will run,
And ever bound by duty's chain
Consult your weal and bliss and gain.
In judgment old, in years a child,
With hero virtues meek and mild,
A fitting lord is he to cheer
His people and remove their fear.
In him all kingly gifts abound,
More noble than in me are found:
Imperial prince, well proved and tried—
Obey him as your lord and guide.
And grant, I pray, the boon I ask:
To please the king be still your task,
That his fond heart, while I remain
Far in the woods, may feel no pain.'

The more he showed his will to tread
The path where filial duty led,
The more the people, round him thronged,
For their dear Rāma's empire longed.
Still more attached his followers grew,
As Rāma, with his brother, drew
The people with his virtues' ties,
Lamenting all with tear-dimmed eyes.
The saintly twice-born, triply old
In glory, knowledge, seasons told,
With hoary heads that shook and bowed,
Their voices raised and spake aloud:
'O steeds, who best and noblest are,
Who whirl so swiftly Rāma's car,
Go not, return: we call on you:
Be to your master kind and true.
For speechless things are swift to hear,
And naught can match a horse's car.
O generous steeds, return, when thus
You hear the cry of all of us.
Each vow he keeps most firm and sure,
And duty makes his spirit pure.
Back with our chief! not wood-ward hence;
Back to his royal residence!

Soon as he saw the aged band,
Exclaiming in their misery, stand,
And their sad cries around him rang,
Swift from his chariot Rāma sprang.

Then, still upon his journey bent,
With Sītā and with Lakshman went
The hero by the old men’s side,
Suiting to theirs his shortened stride.

He could not pass the twice-born throng
As weariedly they walked along:
With pitying heart, with tender eye,
He could not in his chariot fly.

When they the steps of Rāma viewed
That still his onward course pursued,
Woe shook the troubled heart of each,

And burnt with grief they spoke this speech:

‘With thee, O Rāma, to the wood
All Brāhmans go and Brāhmanhood:
Borne on our aged shoulders, see,
Our fires of worship go with thee.

Bright canopies that lend their shade
In Vājapeya’ rites displayed,
In plenteous store are borne behind
Like cloudlets in the autumn wind.
No shelter from the sun hast thou,
And, lest his fury burn thy brow,
These sacrificial shades we bear
Shall aid thee in the noontide glare.

Our hearts, who ever loved to pore
On sacred text and Vedic lore,

An important sacrifice at which seventeen victims were immolated
Now all to thee, beloved, turn,
And for a life in forests yearn.
Deep in our aged bosoms lies
The Vedas' lore, the wealth we prize,
There still, like wives at home, shall dwell,
Whose love and truth protect them well.
To follow thee our hearts are bent;
We need not plan or argument.
All else in duty's law we slight,
For following thee is following right.
O noble Prince, retrace thy way:
O, hear us, Ráma, as we lay,
With many tears and many prayers,
Our aged heads and swan-white hairs
Low in the dust before thy feet;
O, hear us, Ráma, we entreat.
Full many of these who with thee run,
Their sacred rites had just begun.
Unfinished yet those rites remain;
But finished if thou turn again.
All rooted life and things that move
To thee their deep affection prove.
To them, when, warmed by love, they glow
And sue to thee, some favour show.
Each lowly bush, each towering tree
Would follow too for love of thee.
Bound by its root it must remain;
But—all it can—its boughs complain,
As when the wild wind rushes by
It tells its woe in groan and sigh.
No more through air the gay birds flit,
But, foodless, melancholy sit
Together on the branch and call
To thee whose kind heart feels for all.