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Bilhana

AN INDIAN ROMANCE

ADAPTED FROM SANSKRIT

BY

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To

THE HON. MR. P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR, C.S.I.

PREFACE.

THE Italian proverb, *Traduttori, traditori*, brands all translators as traitors, and I have taken care to avoid giving a literal version of the Sanskrit romance of Bilhana on which this poem is based. I have aimed only at a free adaptation of the story, though I have thought it necessary to preserve some of the Oriental ways of expression and have occasionally even given a faithful translation.

This is no place to enter into a discussion of the date and authorship of the Sanskrit poem. It is the work of the poet Bilhana, of Kashmir, who lived about the eleventh century of the Christian era and the romantic episode which forms the subject of the poem is believed to be autobiographical. Numerous versions of the story are current in India and there are several poems on the subject in the vernaculars as well as in Sanskrit. The central theme is however the same in all ; a poet is employed to teach a princess with whom he falls in love ; their secret union provokes the king, who condemns the poet to death ; but he is pardoned in the end and the lovers attain happiness.

The lover's passionate lament when threatened with execution is the most widely known part of the poem ; and it has been translated by Sir Edwin Arnold, as the *Chaurapanchasika*, or the Fifty Distichs of Chauras—the hero has a different name in each version. It were vain to challenge comparison with such a consummate master of English verse as Sir Edwin Arnold. The elaborate digression, moreover, interferes with the unity of the poem and the erotic descriptions are

too frank to bear introduction to the general reader. Much attention has not therefore been bestowed upon this part, and it has been reduced to the limits that could be assigned to it in the usual course of the story.

With Bilhana the love of Beauty amounts to a feeling of religious worship, and the English poet who comes nearest to his genius is Dante Rossetti. The bold defiance of the gods and the invocation to Beauty at the beginning of the poem is unique in Sanskrit literature and is quite significant of his peculiar poetic spirit. As for the quality of his verses, it is enough to say that they have all the grace and felicity of the poetry of Keats, while the sonorous melodies of Sanskrit invest them with additional charm. It is possible again, to see the energy and passionate intensity of Byron, not only in the conception of the plot, specially daring for a Hindu poet, but even in all the details of the poem.

The original is more a lyrical effusion than a verse-tale and has had to be modified in some respects. The plot had to be made more natural and convincing ; some of the jewelled exuberance had to be toned down ; new details of narration had to be supplied and an attempt had to be made to impart some distinctness to the background. But it is hoped all this has not seriously affected the individuality of the Sanskrit original.

OOTACAMUND,
27th May '14.

P. SESHADRI.

BHDana

The tardy grace of fabled Gods of yore
I scorn to seek ; the mighty Triad hold
No need to lure my Muse. The dreamy Lord
Who rules the lofty world of sacred writ
Has charms for starving saints that haunt the
woods

And praying, steep their days in rigid rites.
Benignant Vishnu's power wafts the world
On wings of peace and fortune, laves her shores
In milk and honey—aye, but fails to draw
My willing homage. Siva's dreaded ire
Entombed fair Kamadev, it blew to dust
His soul-enthraling form,—and let that Lord
Of Death command his dismal train of ghosts
And shapeless creatures groping in the gloom
Of sable night. The Muse now speeds in joy
To other realms: of Love that drinks its fill
Of sustenance, the instant hungering hearts
Awake to Light; of Beauty's magic spell
That claims obeisance low from all mankind ;
She sings of souls ethereal whose hearts
Blossom to love and all its ecstasy ;

Upbear their life fragile, through hail and **storm**,
 Whelmed in by wicked mortals; then, the **stress**
 Is o'er, their petals ope again to breathe
 The heaven on earth.

Beyond the golden **mount**
Of Heavenly Meru, the abode of Gods,
 In Northern Ind, there spread the spacious clime
 Of fair Panchala. Wisdom never knew
 A sweeter home ; the Arts bedecked her **brow**
In matchless splendour; Virtue shed her grace
 On every son and daughter drawing breath
 Within her bounds. The Roof and Crown of
 earth
 She shone in deathless fame. A queenly city rose
 Within the realm and held her sovereign **sway**
 O'er all the mighty land ; her very name
 Bespoke her glory—was she not the Home
 Of Lakshmi, of the deity lotus-born
 Whose lovely smile could rain the marvelled
 wealth
 Of empires, sweeten life with countless gifts
 Of happiness? A gracious monarch held
 The sceptre, Mad an, bold in war, a prince
 Of matchless fame who worshipped as his own
 The worlds of Song and Art. Blessed was **his**
queen,

The partner in his toils of state and joys
 Of life, Mandara, fair, sweet and pure ;
 A spotless lily, she adorned her lord
 In guileless passion; robed in light divine
 She sanctified her home. Their wedded life
 Of felicity found its highest wealth
 In Yamini Thilaka, the lovely child,
 "With whom her parent's wish was ever law,
 A paragon of beauty, sweet beyond
 All human praise. She blossomed into youth,
 The fairest flower that grew on earth; her speech
 Was rapturous song and like the gentle swan's
 Her gait; her eyes of wondrous lustre, bright
 Like those of fleet gazelles that roam the woods ;
 Her queenly bust bespoke a noble maid
 Of mighty lineage; the lips of rose
 Enclosed a pretty mouth which often oped
 In dimpled laughter, gay and free. The face
 Shone like the full-orbed moon, and curls that
waved
 In gentle motion coyly bent anon
 To kiss its grace.

The father's anxious care
 Was now the proper fashioning of her mind ;
 Her soul had flowed in sweetest harmony
 To music's million charms and felt the thrill

Of every note and strain, had known the art
 In all its mystery, till man or book
 Could bring no higher dower. But the world
 Of Poesy, of verbal witchery
 In trope and figure, Drama's play of soul,
 And all the virtue of the written page—
 Her vision had not swept the magic shore.
 The monarch drew his minister to his side
 And spake the purpose : "Yamini's heavenly form?
 Would tempt a saint—a shame that such a
 thought
 Should touch her father's mind—but oh, how
 true I.

Which favoured son of learning in this realm
 Shall hold in honest trust the virgin soul
 And fill her mind with largesses I seek ?
 Which vision rest upon her lovely face
 And yet have mind to hunt the crabbed page
 And care to win its lore ? Which heart of flint
 Shall keep unmoved and free when brought anear
 Her mystic spell ? " The grey-haired lord that
 served
 His master's will in loyal faith and sought
 His plaudits in the world, as highest gifts
 That lay within the sphere of man—he gave
 His ready counsel: " Are Panchala's homes

Bereft of lettered men that would await
 Their royal master's need with zest, discharge
 The task in dread obedience ? Tis done
 My lord, to-morrow's eve the palace hall
 Shall boast of all the galaxy of men
 With lore, that tread this spacious city; seers
 Of splendid vision, Brahmin saints who hold
 Within the hollow of a sunken palm
 The wisdom of a thousand ages, minds
 Replete with every thought inscribed upon
 The scroll of knowledge." Forth, the mandate
 flew

For men of light to gather in their force
 And wait the royal pleasure. Evening spread
 Her sable wings and Madan sat in state,
 To hail the great assembly, know its gifts,
 And choose the best to hold the office. Each
 Advanced his claim:—A subtle reasoner
 Was one, that could in hundred ways pursue
 A single thought and split a single thought
 In hundred fragments. All the wealth of Speech
 A second beat to shapeless form, to Roots
 And Letters, traced their life from hour to hour.
 The sacred tomes that chronicle the deeds
 Of countless gods, a third had made his own.
 There was the scholar who could solve with ease

The deepest mysteries of Soul and God ;
 The master of the Vedas, with each sound
 In proper accent, holding in his brain
 Their myriad lines ; he could outpour the words^
 From first to last, and then if need there rise
 From last to first; of Brahmin ritual,
 Of holy worship in its varied forms
 And minute parts, a priest lay honest claim
 To perfect knowledge; wrangling schools of
 thought
 Had there their skilful fencers in debate.
 The Brahmins ceased their speech and Madan
 spake
 Like one, that wandering on a distant way
 Looks down a well for crystal waters pure
 To slake his thirst and finds a barren bed
 Of rock: " Does not this wide assembly count
 The blessed race of poets, lyric souls
 Who could enrich my lovely daughter's mind
 With Song and Art? Has Nature ceased to*
 breathe
 Her fire in man, have all the glorious joys
 Of earth proved vain to open his sleeping eyes
 To Beauty, bear his soul on fancy's flight
 To worlds of endless felicity? Alas,
 That men pursuing dull Philosophy

Should miss **in** thoughtless ignorance the sweets
Of life ? " The Brahmins bent their hoary heads
And said in plaintive notes: " The world of song
 Is not of ascetics, whose only care
 Is service of their Heavenly Lord, penance
And fasting in His glory; nor of minds
That ever toiling sound the inmost depths
 Of knowledge. Poesy woos the young, the
 minds

Imbued with taste, the gifted souls awake
 In over-flowing love and open wonder
To all the finest pulses on the chords
 Of God's Creation. From our paths she flies
 Even as buxom maidens loathe to wed
 The feeble grey-haired dolts in whom the glow
 Of manhood has been chilled ; or else as we
The priestly class flare down our scorn
Upon the lowest caste of men, whose touch
 Is curst pollution."

" And belike you know
At least as darkness knows the light it strives
 In vain to reach, the person that could serve
 My need," the monarch spoke and answer came,
 Not from the hoary scholars in the front
 Intent upon their priestly lore, but far behind
 Prom youths that only hoped for fame in time,

New pilgrims from the shrines of **Knowledge,**
fresh

From offered incense at the altar, minds

Not yet oblivious to joys of life :

" We know a noble bard whose soul is song,

Bilhan, divinely fair in form and mind,

Monarch of poets, dreaming in his sphere

Of golden fancies, first among his line

Of craftsmen. Spring is sweetest in the **year**;

The jasmine in the world of flowers; flight

Is speediest and aim the most devoid

Of fault in arrows blooming on the crown

Of Kama's quiver ; fragrance draws its breath

In finest essence from the musk; the gift

Of speech is blazoned forth in matchless form

When called to pour its rays of scorching **light**

On error prest with reason's show ; man's life

Is happiest and most envied in youth;

His heart most nobly blessed with woman's **love**;

With equal truth be it assured, the world

Of poesy knows no name of greater might

Than Bilhan's. When the royal mandate **sped**

For lettered men, perchance the youthful **bard**

Was lost in raptures of a song, or mused

Alone upon some scene of loveliness

That hides her witching face beyond the **bounds**

Of this our bustling city. Sore **now sighed**
Madan, as one that failed to stretch his arms
When hoards of treasure lay unclaimed. **He**
waved
The scholars home and sent the speedy **word**
That Bilhana was welcome at the court;
The king himself desired the felicity
Of talk and friendly greetings with the **bard.**
With dawn the sovereign was upon his **throne**;
He sat in eager wait, and Bilhan came
Like the Preceptor of the Gods that turns
His sacred feet towards the heavenly court
Of Indra, passing through the lofty gates
Of gold. The sentinels had once refused
Entrance, when as an unknown youth he **sought**
The royal presence and were stung by **words**
Of bitter sarcasm but they now beheld
In awe the poet come, an honoured guest
To court. With grace and kindness beamed **the**
king,
And fain would know the story **of the bard**
Who looked an angel in a world of men.
Bilhan had spent his years of toil in the **halls**
Which royal benevolence had upreared
To Knowledge in the stately capital ;
And ere he fared his homeward way **again,**

He lingered o'er the beauties of the place,
The thousand sights which filled his heart with
joy

And wonder ; felt in every pulse the glow
 Of life and gave it leave to have its turn.
 With rapture Madan scanned his form and saw
 In every limb the God of Song. He gave
 His glowing praise to all the priceless wealth
 His gifted mind treasured in simple ease ;
 The royal coffers flowed as ne'r they flow'd
 To honour men. A thousand gifts bestow'd
 The king; a mansion now was Bilhan's own;
 All worldly riches thus to wealth of mind
 Were join'd. In secret council sat the king
 And sought his trusted minister's aid: "Was
there

Ever such marvel of a man ; in form
 Like Kama himself; versed in arts of song
 Like Guru, lord of every spoken word
 In Heaven. But oh! this care now clouds my
mind r
 Which maid could face his charms with steeled
heart
 And keep her soul untouched by thoughts of
love?

Which father bring such loveliness divine

So near his daughter's view, if speedy love
And union were not his wanton aim?
The valued wisdom of his mind has found
No sober habitation, but a form
Of tempting beauty, meant to rouse in hearts.
Of even holiest fire, delicious thoughts
Of sweet amour and wanton dalliance ;
And like a blossom of the Kalpaka
Which lures a myriad bees in buzzing search
Of honied essence, oh ! his form would draw
The hearts of women in enraptured love,
And bear them on the wings of ecstasy ;
It is no trifling folly to lay bare
The guileless fancies of a virgin soul
To all this poet's witching world. Alas,
But is it not like losing untold wealth
To miss his aid in fashioning the mind
Of one who is to us the very crown
Of earthly felicity ? Thy subtle wit
Was ever known to grasp in faultless reach
The gravest problems of my home and state ;
A deep and ceaseless stream, no eyes have caught
It dry ; and who will doubt, it knows a way
To take us even through this stress, to keep
The precious prize without the haunting fear
Of gloomy spectres flitting on the stage

Her penance lasts, begun when Vasant beamed.
His smile of flowers on earth this year.
On curious vows she hath resolved—no man
Devoid of light shall cross her path, before
Her sacred duties reach their fulfilment.
The hapless soul in whom the ray of heaven
Is quenched—the very sight is now to her
Pollution's touch. The city roads have oft'
Been cleared of sightless men by beat of drum,
When forth her jewelled palanquin of pearl
Sallied in state beyond the palace gates
For worship at the shrine. You see the star
That glows within this maze :—A lie and all
Is done. Proclaim to her that Bilhana,
The greatest bard a royal father's care
Could seek for enriching her mind, has lost
His sight beyond all hope ; a screen shall stand
Between them at their lessons; and her vow
Shall hold without a break. And as for him,
Another lie shall keep his mind in dread
Of rudeness to the veil:—The Princess fears
A dismal streak of loathsome leprosy
Is slowly spreading on her face, and hence
Desires some privacy ; a near view
At least she likes to guard against." The king
Gave heed with rapt attention, lost in joy

Than reckless faith of youth that leads the **world**
 To peril's brink. The walls are there upreared
 Against our mortal foe; if there be none
 To-day, they serve to-morrow; if none at **all**,
 It is because their terror holds." He sought
 The Brahmin priests who knew the subtle **flow**
 Of stars. They read the mystic scroll **and**
scanned

Their baffling path to catch the lucky hour
 To start the poet's work. The moment came,
 And prayers rose for Brahma's spotless spouse,
 Saraswati who rules the world of speech.
 The mighty bard who sang the glorious deeds
 And triumphs of that ancient Solar prince
 liVho bridged the raging waves to reach his **love**
 And crush the wicked foe whose guilty soul
 Had wrought her pain, his muse was next
invoked;

It was a day of festive joy for all;
 The royal presents flowed with lavish hand ;
 And blessings poured on lovely Yamini
 For ever-growing wisdom. Bilhana
 Now sought the palace walls each day, as nooa
 Mellowed to early eve and gently roused
 His fount of song and wonders of the mind,
 To feed the thirsting soul of Yamini,

Till shades of gathering darkness saw him home—
 To muse in fondness on the joyous work
 His favoured days had found for him. The hours
 Were fraught for her with deep import;
 She grasped with lightning speed the varied lore
 That Bilhana revealed from day to day—
 Till her preceptor wondered ere a year

Had passed, what newer worlds his mind could
 draw

For her. She knew the quintessence of song
 And all the forms in which the poets decked
 The muse ; the monuments of mind which bards
 Had fashioned for the world were hers. The
 science

Of wealth and polity acclaimed by all
 The wise as harbinger of felicity
 For men had become hers, and now there passed
 Before her vision plays designed for Love
 That flashed their spotless bliss across the stage ;
 The crystal purity of laws of song
 She learnt to feel at every turn ; the art
 Of love as bodied forth in books, her mind
 Beheld in joy—the princess pa'ssed the bard
 In all such wisdom and his gifts of lore
 Outgrew in fruit when planted in her mind.
 A train of golden fancies filled her mind

Till glowing with the joy she longed for them
In life. Her dreams now kept her company
All day and night; and lounging on her bed
Of ivory, behind the silken wall,
She mused on all the happy loves whose course
Was chronicled in books of song. Her ears
Were wide awake for sound of sweet footsteps
That brought the lyric soul whose presence
chimed

With entrance into realms of untold bliss—
For did not Bilhan speak of wondrous things
Each day, of joyous tales of love that bathed
Her heart in heavenly radiance? He drew
Her sighs for one that languished on the hills
For touch of her he loved and sought to reach
Her through a cloud that swam across the skies;
The tale of woe was not in vain. And now
It was a maid that lived her life beneath
The shelter of a sage's forest home,
In virgin freedom, till she found a royal heart
That flowed to her in love. But oh, the ring
Which was their symbol of communion
She lost; her princely lover knew her not;
A nameless stranger at the palace gates,
She strove in vain to wake the memories
Of old, and flash them on the monarch's mind,

Till voices from the heavens declared her true..
And now the tale is changed—another came
To Kama's grace with sweet and sudden steps;
She sought her downy bed in peace one night
And woke to find a prince had been with her;
The princess drew the hero of her dream
And royal embassies that sped from state
To state, approached the lover and their hearts
Were joined in holy wedlock's union.

There was again that princess pure in faith
Who sought a hermit's presence every day ;
Her tender arms upbore a golden plate
Of daily offerings of flower and fruit;
She prayed and coyly asked a boon, to wed
A warrior of mighty prowess ; lo!
The hermit dropped his guise, the happy prince
She long had loved, now grasped her in his arms.
It was a dismal void for Yamini,
When Bilhan turned his homeward way at fall
Of night. The stars that flowered in the skies
And even the dazzling glory of their queen
Her vision left in chill obscurity,
And tossing on her sleepless bed she longed
For love to cheer her life. When would its light
Illume her days ? A lover pour his tale
Of passion in her ears, or seek a cloud

Trailing across the heavens to speed his words ?
 Some king of matchless greatness care to seek
 Her hand? In patience would she bear
 The cruel curses of a Fatal Ring,
 If the same bliss were hers at start and end.
 Perchance some prince that hailed from unknown
 lands

Was flying on his winged magic horse
 That very night, towards her storied hall,
 To light upon the marble floor and turn
 His wondering eyes to her. Was there anear
 To her an unknown lover ? The thoughts were
 vain,
 The leaden moments weighed upon her heart
 And caused it ceaseless pain. Two years had
 passed,
 They formed a music strain to Bilhan's soul
 And roused its sweetest harmonies. Far more
 Than in the worlds of song was there in her
 Felicity supreme.

It was a night
 In *Sarath* time ; resplendent shone the moon
 And as he poured his learned talk, the bard
 Beheld in sudden joy the jewelled orb
 That shimmered through the window's gilded
 bars

And calmly rose to view. His soul now burst
In rapturous praise of the effulgent moon.
He spoke his words—it was the wont for them
To form a song for lovely Yamini,
To draw her lyric sweetness : " Queen of light,
Touching the eastern skies with rosy bloom,
You strike with anguish parted lovers; thrill
The seas with joy; the lotus droops its head ;
The lily bares its hidden wealth; the heavens
Reveal a world of spacious breadth enrobed
In silver hues; and lovely Kama speeds
In pride, upon his thousand victories.
Sovereign star, the poet's fancy oft
Hath seen mysterious forms in dusky spots
That tinge your heart.—It is a spreading tree,
The bard hath said, or else, a hare or deer ;
But oh, it is the void creation's lord
Hath caused by robbing you of nectar lodged
Within your breast, to sweeten his love's lips.
Vishnu reclining on the swelling sea
Is there; behold the stary spray, the wide
Expansive blue, that buoys Him on his bed ;
What tales have poets woven round "the spot !
It is the mole of luck ; the muddy crust
Enwashed by ocean waves, the frisking deer ;
The shadow of the earth ; the sapphire piece

That Indra loves to wear ; but as I see,
 The mass of darkness swallowed by the moon.
 The gate for Kama's passage to the earth
 On mission of enthralling man, she rains
 The sweet affliction on the lover's heart.
 Is she a white petalled lotus flower
 That springs in stately beauty in a pond
 Of deep blue waters ? Eve's bejewelled ball
 That bounds in sport towards the aerial vault
 At dusk ? The magic stone on which the darts
 Of Kama win their poignant, smiting edge ?
 It was on such a night that Krishna sought
 The scented grove on Jamna's banks, to meet
 His love, who stole from home and lay in wait
 For sweet embrace. On such a night again,
 Did Usha feel her princely lover's touch
 When all within the palace lay in silence hush-
 ed.

Maiden of lotus eyes, behold, the moon
 Hath cast her lovely mantle on the earth
 In witching splendour. Will you close your
 life
 To all this beauty, ?" asked the bard, his brows
 Glowing with poetic fire. His passion roused
 Yamini, her whole being rushed to meet
 The singer's heart. Could blindness ever view

The moon with thrilling rapture, sing her praise
 In moving language ? Has such wonder been
 In all this world, and whence this happening?
 The myth is all my father's crafty tale—
 The veil shall vanish at my anxious touch,
 Despite my sacred vow ; it cannot be
 The Gods will frown upon this act of mine;
 His lofty soul is proof to all the world
 Of sin, and with good Bilhan must be heaven.
 Her lily arm withdrew the silken screen
 And lo, there was the handsome bard who looked
 Upon her form with eyes of wondrous lustre
 And saw her beauty flash like lightning's glow.
 " Was this the angel wickedness belied,"
 Each thought of other. As she sweetly bent
 Adown to hide her blushes, Bilhan strained
 Her slender figure in his arms and felt
 A wakening rapture claim her all his own.
 His being rushed to press her rose-bud lips—
 It was a happiness beyond all dreams ;
 The gates of bliss now poured their wealth of
light
 Upon the lovers drowned in sacred rites
 Of Love. And now to them the world was
naught,
 Receding like a murmuring wave, to seek

A distant shore, beyond all human ken.
Their lives had found the highest heaven on
earth ;
The golden dreams of sweet romance now stood
Revealed in crystal shape; and thence their days
Were such that song of hallowed fire could draw
Its vital, moving breath from them, and blaze
To glorious form. " Now doth my soul of song
Awake to find the sordid world enrobed
In joy divine," the poet exclaimed each hour.
The lovers closed their minds to yawning gulfs
That royal wrath may ope beneath their feet;
They kissed the blossoming flower unaware
Of thorns that lurk, or bees that hide their sting
Within its perfumed walls of tender touch ;
Basking on sunny banks of spring, the storm
That lowered on the distant skies to break
Its fury on their heads escaped the view ;
The secret tale of love now slowly wound
Its way towards the monarch's ears through
maids
That quailed in fear to see their virgin charge
Bespoiled, touched in sin by alien hands ;
And like a wounded lion, the father rose
In blinding wrath: " The wicked souls shall die
And rid themselves of sin in burning Hell,"

He gasped in ire, and summoned forth the child
 That was his pride, and now had wrought the
taint

Upon his house. And like a tender dove
 That cowers at the dreaded kite's approach,
 She sought the monarch's presence, head bent
down,

In sorrow for her lord, whose very life
 Now lay exposed to royal wrath. These words.
 The father spoke in shame and bitter anguish:

" Was it that thou hadst not a kingly sire
 To call an assemblage of princely youths
 Of noble lineage, valorous in war
 And famed for form, to bestow thee for wife
 On him that met your choice in eye and mind,
 That thou hast sought the ragged bed
 Of Brahman rhymesters, basely sprung in life,
 Unmindful of the blood that gave you breath.
 The seeds of grovelling impurity
 Thy hands have sown and they will grow in
time-

To make my house a shame to all the world."

" All blame is thine my lord," she gently said,
 " If bringing souls to untold bliss is blame ;"
 You brought us near, we saw and only loved ;
 I met the noblest soul on earth, my being

Rushed forth to him in furious, hungering love
 And all was happiness." In rage he cried,
 " No more this sweetening of coarsest wrong
 Thy wicked prattling only flaunts thy sin
 To greater infamy, the blazing flame
 Will shed its lurid light to farther ends.
 A father's instinct saves thy tainted life
 To leave it lingering in long penance,
 But he that lured thy guileless heart to vice
 Shall expiate his secret villainy
 Within the jaws of death."

" 'Tis I my Lord,
 That was the temptress, all thy royal vengeance
 Should aim its dart at me, the root and cause
 Of all this ill to noble Bilhana
 Who owns me now, my very senses all;
 With him, my fateful tale now ends on earth."
 " Shall little urchins preach to hoary lords
 Their kingly duties ? Raise their voice against
 Their mandates ? Ere the mellowed sun shall
 seek
 His golden couch this night, the hangman stops
 The villain's sinful breath."

"The shades of night,"
 She murmured as he passed, " will plunge me
 deep

In Death and leave you childless on your throne,
 To dispense justice like an Iron King
 And shackle hearts in written laws of priests
 And fools." The bitter words unheeded fell,
 The hapless maiden languished on her couch,
 Aware of nothing save her cursed fate
 Which snapped the chain of bliss on earth for
 ever.

Mandara sued her husband's grace and sought
 To calm his anger ; their own tale of love
 Bore not the severe mould of wedlock's law,
 Or plaudits of their parents. Was she not
 A petty chieftain's daughter raised to share
 A mighty throne, because his youthful eyes
 Avowed her fair ? Let birds that sang the hymn
 Of marriage on that lovely morn in spring,
 When with the freedom of a rushing flood
 They met, within the lonely champak bower
 Upon the margin of the lotus lake
 To become man and wife,—let them declare
 The truth. Which father blessed the union?
 Which greedy priest drawled out his sacredness
 In mystic murmurs praying gods to bear
 Witness ? Had not his constant pleadings wrung
 His father's slow consent, their stolen bliss
 ^Confirmed by late approval ? And shall they now

Deny such gentle pardoning in turn,
 To her, their only child ? " The world will go
 To nameless ruin, if statesmen ever heed
 A woman's siren tongue "—he roared in scorn
 And sternly bade her in.

As evening flapped
 Its dusky wings for spreading flight, they led
 The poet ruthlessly to death in chains
 Of hardest steel. Beyond the city's bounds,
 Anear a shrine to Kali's dreaded power
 The grim assembly stood in speechless awe ;
 The hangman wore a saddened look this time,
 Though oft the lurid sun had seen him ply
 His hireling sword with quick-deciding strength,
 Felling the brawniest to grovelling earth.
 The hapless lover mused in pain, and saw
 In trembling fear, the gloomy scowl of Death,
 The fiendish monster that had raised his hand
 Of iron might to snatch his cup of bliss;
 But brightened oft at cheerful thought of her,
 The stainless angel of his heart. " My soul
 Knows naught of sorrow's touch, illumed with
light
 Of holiest love," he said, when shaking heads
 Would rudely fathom such a secret joy.
 Ere death soon plunged him down to abysses

Of speechless agony, or what perchance
 Was worse, to darkening oblivion
 And empty nothingness, his dreamy eyes
 Would range in raptures o'er the fleeting past
 And catch its lingering joy. In rushing speed
 Now flowed delicious memories ; he quaffed
 Again their nectared sweetness, poring o'er
 His foredoomed tale of love. "I have enshrined
 Within the golden temple of my heart
 The Goddess of the lotus eyes. Her form
 Of heavenly mould now sweetly floats upon
 My vision, beaming beauty as she wakes
 From sleep. Like long-lost knowledge speeding-
 back

In sudden swelling flight, she fills my mind
 With bliss intoxicant. The full-orbed moon
 Swims not in greater glory up the heavens
 Than she within my sight; her radiant youth
 Is dower which goddesses may like to own
 And love. Her luscious lips I seek again
 Like hungry bee that buzzing darts on flowers
 For honey. I have e'er adored her love
 As life's most sacred gift, beyond compare
 With even all the learning of the world.
 Behold her beauteous face in fresher form,
 With sweet averted look when gently vexed,

Apart will brand his crafty, wrinkled brow
 With infamy, if from that tangled maze
 His crooked wisdom caused, the painless way
 Remained unfound ? When passions calmed to
peace

Will Madan fail, to scan his share of guilt
 And scorn his boasted craft which had declared
 The end was safe? And was it statesmanship
 To blight a daughter's happiness with fate
 Of tainted widowhood ? How could he bear
 The lover's cry of anguish—Hark ! he speaks
 Again, his silver voice now breaks the calm
 Of evening—" The dying moments come
 And I shall never sigh or groan to see
 My form dissolved to primal elements—

The dreadful end must close on all. But God,
 This be the only prayer on my lips,
 That ever after leaving mortal worlds,
 This body mine, be dedicate to serving her :
 As air my fortune be to fan her face,
 As water fill the envied lotus tanks
 That shall be hallowed by her touch ; as light
 Illume her habitation and as earth
 But feel her gentle tread." He stops and forth
 The tears swell from all the gathered crowd;
 The minister sternly bids the hangman stop

His cruel task, exclaiming " I will be
A ragged beggar trudging in the streets
Than hold my office after such a wrong,
And proffer council to my king." Post-haste
He sought his master's presence, where the queen
Was pouring forth her anguish for the child,
Imploring pardon. Pain had thawed his ire
To pity. Calmly rooted to his throne
He pilloried his judgment, wondering
If it were wisdom's way, to cause a world
Of misery where might be perfect bliss—
To see his daughter wane away to death,
His loving queen with her and himself lose
All joy in life, immured in living death.
Shall not his kingly power stem the tide,
And save his happy home ? The minister rushed
To tell his tale of how the deed was stopped
And Madan joyed the way was open still,
To change the gloom to radiant light. The lord
Could swear no sin of wanton youth was there,
But love of holiest purity, and waxed
With warmth for quick repeal of whathad passed
His lips. No need was there for further doubt
Or thought. The speech gave sinew to his will
And brought the monarch's mind to action's
point.

ERRATA .

Page 3, line 2 for fair, sweet, *read* fair and sweet.

Page 6, line 5 *for* there rise read arose.

Page 6, line 8 for lay *read* laid.

Page 20, line 21 for stary read starry.

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