

any female vessel.' Having delevered herself thus, she entered into the flaming fire ; and thereat a celestial shower of blossoms rained all around from heaven. O Lord, this is she that hath been born as the daughter of king Janaka,—thy wife, O mighty-armed one. Thou art the eternal Vishnu. The enemy, endowed with the splendour of a hill, formerly that had been slain through the wrath (of Vedavati), hath now been slain by her, by help of thine superhuman prowess. And this one of eminent righteousness would again spring up on earth like a flame from a field furrowed by the plough. This one named Vedavati was born in the Krita age ; and in the Tretā age, for compassing the destruction of that Raksha, she was born in the Maithila line of the high-souled Janaka."

SECTION XVIII.

When Vedavati had entered into fire, Rāvana, ascending Pushpaka, began to range the earth. And coming to Uçiraviḡa, Rāvana saw a king (named) Marutta, sacrificing along with the deities. And a righteous Brahmarshi named Samvartta, the very brother of Vrihashpati, officiated at the sacrifice accompanied by the deities. And seeing that Raksha invincible by reason of the boon he had received, the deities, apprehensive of being worsted by him, assumed the forms of beasts. And Indra became a peacock and the king of righteousness, a crow, and the bestower of riches a lizard, and Varuna a swan ; and, O slayer of foes, others also became other deasts. And then Rāvana entered into that sacrifice

like an unclean dog. And then coming up to the king, Rāvana—lord of Rākshasas—said: ‘Give me battle, or say,—*I am defeated.*’ Whereat king Marutta asked, him—‘Who art thou?’ And Rāvana laughing in contempt said,—‘O king, I am delighted, that lacking curiosity, thou dost not dishonour Rāvana, younger brother unto the bestower of riches. What other man is there in these three regions that knoweth not the might of me, who, conquering my brother, has got possession of this car.’ Thereat Marutta spoke unto Rāvana, saying,—‘Blessed for sooth art thou, by whom thy elder brother hath been vanquished in fight; and a person so praiseworthy there is not in the three worlds. An act, that is divorced from righteousness and that is reprehended by people, can never be praiseworthy. Having committed a foul act, plumbest thou upon thy having vanquished thy brother? And practising what piety hadst thou a-fortune received the boon? I had never before heard the like of what thou sayest. But O perverse one, stay now. Living thou shalt not back. To-day with my sharpened shafts shall I despatch thee to the abode of Yama.’ Then taking up his bow and arrows, that king of men went out for encounter; but Samavartta stood in the way. And that great sage said unto Marutta words informed with affection ‘If thou hear my speech, thou shouldst not fight. If this Maheçwara-sacrifice should remain incomplete, it will burn up thy dynasty. Where is the fight of one initiated in a sacrifice? And where is the passion of one initiated in a sacrifice? And victory is ever uncertain; and the Rākshasa is difficult to vanquish. And thereupon, the lord of Earth—Marutta—desisted in consonance with the instructions of his spiritual preceptor; and composed addressed himself to completing the sacrifice, giving up his bow with the arrow set. And thereat considering him as defeated, Suka proclaimed this all round; and

from delight cried aloud, 'Victory unto Rāvana!' And then devouring the Maharshis that were present at the place of sacrifice, Rāvana, satiated with their blood, again went to the earth. On Rāvana having departed, the deities, inhabiting the ethereal regions—Indra etc.—assuming their proper forms, addressed those creatures. And from joy Indra spoke unto the purple-plumed peacock,—'Pleased am I with thee thou righteous one. No fear shall spring to thee from serpents; and thy plumage shall be furnished with an hundred eyes. And when I shall shower, thou shalt be filled with glee as a token of my satisfaction with thee.' Thus did Indra—chief of celestials, confer a boon on the peacock. Formerly, O king, the peacock's wings had one unvaried blue. Having received the boon, the peacock departed. Then O Rāma, the king of righteousness said unto the crow, seated in front of the sacrificial apartment 'O bird, I am well pleased with thee. Listen to my words as I utter them. As I have been pleased with thee, thou shalt without doubt, enjoy immunity from the various ailments to which the birds are subject. And O bird, from my curse fear of death shall not approach thee; and thou shalt exist so long as people do not slay thee. And those men residing in my dominion, being smitten with hunger, shall be refreshed along with thy relations, when thou hast eaten and been refreshed.' Then Varuna addressed that lord of birds the swan ranging the waters of the Gangā,—'Listen to my words fraught with joy, thy hue shall be charming, mild, and like unto the lunar disc; and it shall be beautiful, resembling the sheen of spotless foam. And approaching my person thou shalt ever be beautiful to behold; and thou shalt, as a sign of my gratification, attain unparalleled complacence.' Formerly, O Rāma, swans had not a hue of one unvaried whiteness. Their wings ended in, blue, and their breasts wore the spotless hue of tender grass. And then Vaiçravana addressed the chameleon as it was stationed

