XVIII.

THE MATCH-MAKING JACKAL.

ONCE on a time there lived a weaver, whose ancestors were very rich, but whose father had wasted the property which he had inherited in riotous living. He was born in a palace-like house, but he now lived in a miserable hut. He had no one in the world, his parents and all his relatives having died. Hard by the hut was the lair of a jackal. The jackal, remembering the wealth and grandeur of the weaver's forefathers, had compassion on him, and one day coming to him, said, "Friend weaver, I see what a wretched life you are leading. I have a good mind to improve your condition. I'll try and marry you to the daughter of the king of this country." "I become the king's son-in-law!" replied the weaver; "that will take place only when the sun rises in the west." "You doubt my power?" rejoined the jackal; "you will see, I'll bring it about."

The next morning the jackal started for the king's

city, which was many miles off. On the way he entered a plantation of the Piper betel plant, and plucked a large quantity of its leaves. He reached the capital, and contrived to get inside the palace. On the premises of the palace was a tank in which the ladies of the king's household performed their morning and afternoon ablutions. At the entrance of that tank the jackal laid himself down. The daughter of the king happened to come just at the time to bathe, accompanied by her maids. The princess was not a little struck at seeing the jackal lying down at the entrance. She told her maids to drive the jackal away. The jackal rose as if from sleep, and instead of running away, opened his bundle of betel-leaves, put some into his mouth, and began chewing them. The princess and her maids were not a little astonished at the sight. They said among themselves, "What an uncommon jackal is this! From what country can he have come? A jackal chewing betel-leaves! why thousands of men and women of this city cannot indulge in that luxury. He must have come from a wealthy land." The princess asked the jackal, "Sivalu![1] from what country do you come? It must be a very prosperous country where the jackals chew betel-leaves. Do other animals in your country chew betel-leaves?" "Dearest princess," replied the jackal, "I come from a land flowing with milk and honey. Betel-leaves are as

[1] A name for a jackal, not unlike Reynard in Europe.

plentiful in my country as the grass in your fields. All animals in my country—cows, sheep, dogs—chew betel-leaves. We want no good thing." "Happy is the country," said the princess, "where there is such plenty, and thrice happy the king who rules in it!" "As for our king," said the jackal, "he is the richest king in the world. His palace is like the heaven of Indra. I have seen your palace here; it is a miserable hut compared to the palace of our king." The princess, whose curiosity was excited to the utmost pitch, hastily went through her bath, and going to the apartments of the queen-mother, told her of the wonderful jackal lying at the entrance of the tank. Her curiosity being excited, the jackal was sent for. When the jackal stood in the presence of the queen, he began munching the betel-leaves. "You come," said the queen, "from a very rich country. Is your king married?" "Please your majesty, our king is not married. Princesses from distant parts of the world tried to get married to him, but he rejected them all. Happy will that princess be whom our king condescends to marry!" "Don't you think, Sivalu," asked the queen, "that my daughter is as beautiful as a Peri, and that she is fit to be the wife of the proudest king in the world?" "I quite think," said the jackal, "that the princess is exceedingly handsome; indeed, she is the handsomest princess I have ever seen; but I don't know whether our king will have a liking for her." "Liking for my

daughter!" said the queen, "you have only to paint her to him as she is, and he is sure to turn mad with love. To be serious, Sivalu, I am anxious to get my daughter married. Many princes have sought her hand, but I am unwilling to give her to any of them, as they are not the sons of great kings. But your king seems to be a great king. I can have no objection to making him my son-in-law." The queen sent word to the king, requesting him to come and see the jackal. The king came and saw the jackal, heard him describe the wealth and pomp of the king of his country, and expressed himself not unwilling to give away his daughter in marriage to him.

The jackal after this returned to the weaver and said to him, "O lord of the loom, you are the luckiest man in the world; it is all settled; you are to become the son-in-law of a great king. I have told them that you are yourself a great king, and you must behave yourself as one. You must do just as I instruct you, otherwise your fortune will not only not be made, but both you and I will be put to death." "I'll do just as you bid me," said the weaver. The shrewd jackal drew in his own mind a plan of the method of procedure he should adopt, and after a few days went back to the palace of the king in the same manner in which he had gone before, that is to say, chewing betel-leaves and lying down at the entrance of the tank on the premises of the palace. The king and queen were glad to see

him, and eagerly asked him as to the success of his mission. The jackal said, "In order to relieve your minds I may tell you at once that my mission has been so far successful. If you only knew the infinite trouble I have had in persuading his Majesty, my sovereign, to make up his mind to marry your daughter, you would give me no end of thanks. For a long time he would not hear of it, but gradually I brought him round. You have now only to fix an auspicious day for the celebration of the solemn rite. There is one bit of advice, however, which I, as your friend, would give you. It is this. My master is so great a king that if he were to come to you in state, attended by all his followers, his horses and his elephants, you would find it impossible to accommodate them all in your palace or in your city. I would therefore propose that our king should come to your city, not in state, but in a private manner; and that you send to the outskirts of your city your own elephants, horses, and conveyances, to bring him and only a few of his followers to your palace." "Many thanks, wise Sivalu, for this advice. I could not possibly make accommodation in my city for the followers of so great a king as your master is. I should be very glad if he did not come in state; and trust you will use your influence to persuade him to come in a private manner; for I should be ruined if he came in state." The jackal then gravely said, "I will do my best in the matter,"

and then returned to his own village, after the royal astrologer had fixed an auspicious day for the wedding.

On his return the jackal busied himself with making preparations for the great ceremony. As the weaver was clad in tatters, he told him to go to the washermen of the village and borrow from them a suit of clothes. As for himself, he went to the king of his race, and told him that on a certain day he would like one thousand jackals to accompany him to a certain place. He went to the king of crows, and begged that his corvine majesty would be pleased to allow one thousand of his black subjects to accompany him on a certain day to a certain place. He preferred a similar petition to the king of paddy-birds.

At last the great day arrived. The weaver arrayed himself in the clothes which he had borrowed from the village washermen. The jackal made his appearance, accompanied by a train of a thousand jackals, a thousand crows, and a thousand paddy-birds. The nuptial procession started on their journey, and towards sundown arrived within two miles of the king's palace. There the jackal told his friends, the thousand jackals, to set up a loud howl; at his bidding the thousand crows cawed their loudest; while the hoarse screechings of the thousand paddy-birds furnished a suitable accompaniment. The effect may be imagined. They all together made a noise the like of which had never been heard since the world began. While this

unearthly noise was going on, the jackal himself hastened to the palace, and asked the king whether he thought he would be able to accommodate the wedding-party, which was about two miles distant, and whose noise was at that moment sounding in his ears. The king said "Impossible, Sivalu; from the sound of the procession I infer there must be at least one hundred thousand souls. How is it possible to accommodate so many guests? Please, so arrange that the bridegroom only will come to my house." "Very well," said the jackal; "I told you at the beginning that you would not be able to accommodate all the attendants of my august master. I'll do as you wish. My master will alone come in undress. Send a horse for the purpose." The jackal, accompanied by a horse and groom, came to the place where his friend the weaver was, thanked the thousand jackals, the thousand crows and the thousand paddy-birds, for their valuable services, and told them all to go away, while he himself, and the weaver on horseback, wended their way to the king's palace. The bridal party, waiting in the palace, were greatly disappointed at the personal appearance of the weaver; but the jackal told them that his master had purposely put on a mean dress, as his would-be father-in-law declared himself unable to accommodate the bridegroom and his attendants coming in state. The royal priests now began the interesting ceremony, and the nuptial knot was tied for ever. The bridegroom seldom

opened his lips, agreeably to the instructions of the jackal, who was afraid lest his speech should bewray him. At night when he was lying in bed he began to count the beams and rafters of the room, and said audibly, "This beam will make a first-rate loom, that other a capital beam, and that yonder an excellent sley." The princess, his bride, was not a little astonished. She began to think in her mind, "Is the man, to whom they have tied me, a king or a weaver? I am afraid he is the latter; otherwise why should he be talking of weaver's loom, beam, and sley? Ah, me! is this what the fates kept in store for me?" In the morning the princess related to the queen-mother the weaver's soliloquy. The king and queen, not a little surprised at this recital, took the jackal to task about it. The ready-witted jackal at once said, "Your Majesty need not be surprised at my august master's soliloquy. His palace is surrounded by a population of seven hundred families of the best weavers in the world, to whom he has given rent-free lands, and whose welfare he continually seeks. It must have been in one of his philanthropic moods that he uttered the soliloquy which has taken your Majesty by surprise." The jackal, however, now felt that it was high time for himself and the weaver to decamp with the princess, since the proverbial simplicity of his friend of the loom might any moment involve him in danger. The jackal therefore represented to the king, that weighty affairs

of state would not permit his august master to spend another day in the palace; that he should start for his kingdom that very day with his bride; and his master was resolved to travel *incognito* on foot, only the princess, now the queen, should leave the city in a *palki*. After a great deal of yea and nay, the king and queen at last consented to the proposal. The party came to the outskirts of the weaver's village; the *palki* bearers were sent away; and the princess, who asked where her husband's palace was, was made to walk on foot. The weaver's hut was soon reached, and the jackal, addressing the princess, said, "This, madam, is your husband's palace." The princess began to beat her forehead with the palms of her hands in sheer despair. "Ah, me! is this the husband whom Prajapati[1] intended for me? Death would have been a thousand times better."

As there was nothing for it, the princess soon got reconciled to her fate. She, however, determined to make her husband rich, especially as she knew the secret of becoming rich. One day she told her husband to get for her a pice-worth of flour. She put a little water in the flour, and smeared her body with the paste. When the paste dried on her body, she began wiping the paste with her fingers; and as the paste fell in small balls from her body, it got turned into gold. She repeated this process every day for some

[1] The god who presides over marriages.

time, and thus got an immense quantity of gold. She soon became mistress of more gold than is to be found in the coffers of any king. With this gold she employed a whole army of masons, carpenters and architects, who in no time built one of the finest palaces in the world. Seven hundred families of weavers were sought for and settled round about the palace. After this she wrote a letter to her father to say that she was sorry he had not favoured her with a visit since the day of her marriage, and that she would be delighted if he now came to see her and her husband. The king agreed to come, and a day was fixed. The princess made great preparations against the day of her father's arrival. Hospitals were established in several parts of the town for diseased, sick, and infirm animals. The beasts in thousands were made to chew betel-leaves on the wayside. The streets were covered with Cashmere shawls for her father and his attendants to walk on. There was no end of the display of wealth and grandeur. The king and queen arrived in state, and were infinitely delighted at the apparently boundless riches of their son-in-law. The jackal now appeared on the scene, and saluting the king and queen, said—"Did I not tell you?"

Here my story endeth,
The Natiya-thorn withereth, &c.