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THE DOVE OF DACCA

A Bengal legend tells the pitiful fate of a Hindu Raja, the last of his race, attacked by Muhammadan invaders. He went out bravely to meet them carrying with him a pigeon whose return to the palace was to be regarded by his family as an intimation of his defeat and a signal to put themselves to death and to burn their home. He gained the victory, but while he stooped to drink in the river the bird escaped and flew home. The Raja hurried after but was only in time to throw himself on the pyre.—*Beast and Man in India.*

THE freed dove flew to the Raja's tower,
Fled from the slaughter of Muslim kings.
And the thorns have covered the city of Gaur—
Dove—dove. O homing dove!
Little white traitor with woe on thy wings!

The Raja of Dacca rode under the wall
He set in his bosom a dove of flight:
'If she return be sure that I fall'—
Dove—dove. O homing dove!
Pressed to his heart in the press of the fight.

The Kings of the North were scattered abroad,
The Raja of Dacca he slew them all—
Hot from slaughter he stooped at the ford,
But the dove—O the dove!—the homing dove
She thought of her cote on the palace wall.

She opened her wings and she fluttered away,
Fluttered away beyond recall.
She came to the palace at break of day.
Dove—dove. O homing dove!
Flying so fast for a kingdom's fall.

The Queens of Dacca they died in flame,
Died in the flame of the palace old
To save their honour from sack and shame;
But the dove, the dove, O the homing dove,
She cooed to her young where the smoke-wreath rolled!

The Raja of Dacca rode fast and fleet,
Followed as fast as a horse could fly,
And he saw the palace lay black at his feet;
And the dove—the dove—the homing dove
Circled alone in the stainless sky.

So the dove came to the Raja's tower,
Came from the slaughter of Muslim kings.
So the thorns covered the city of Gaur,
And Dacca was lost for a white dove's wings.
Dove—dove. O homing dove,
Dacca is lost from the roll of the Kings!

RUDYARD KIPLING.