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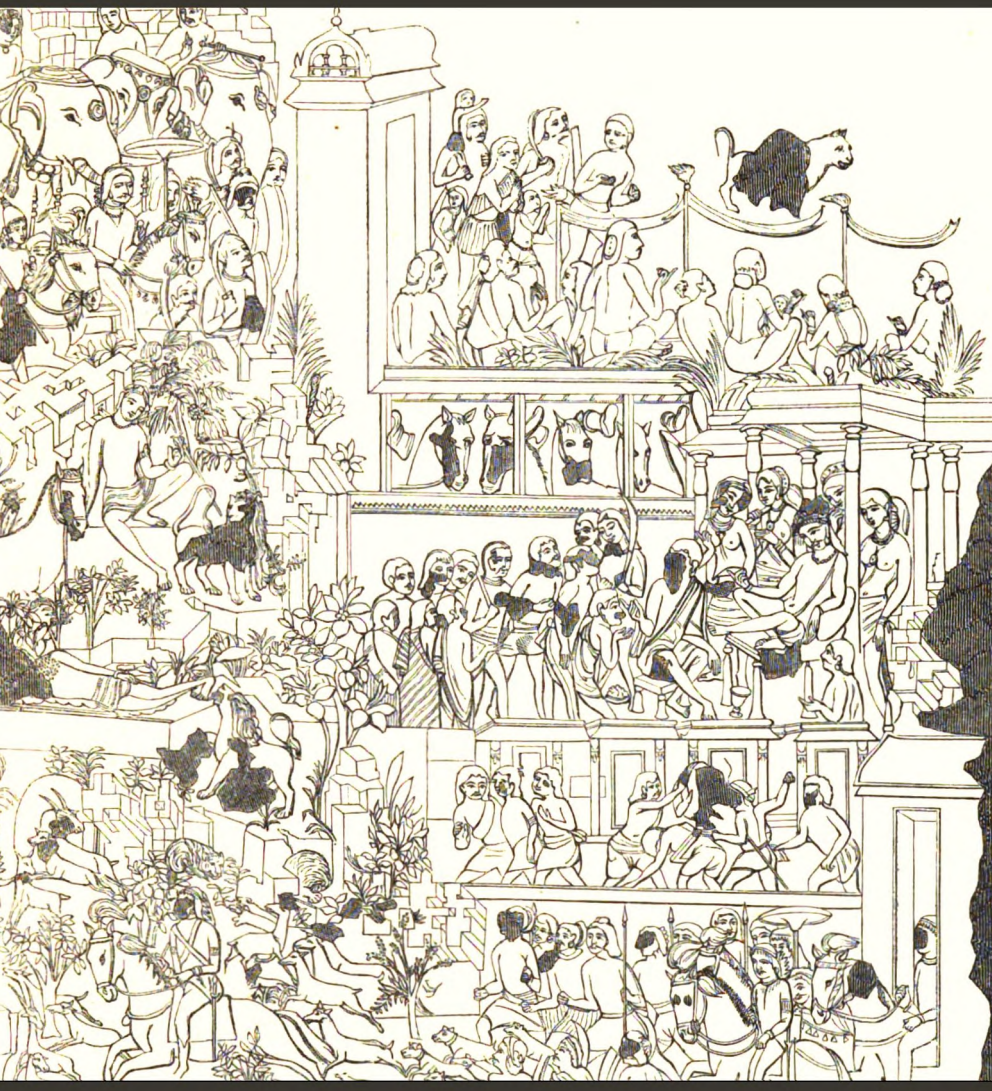

Life in Ancient India

Charlotte Speir Manning,
Manning (Charlotte Speir), George Scharf

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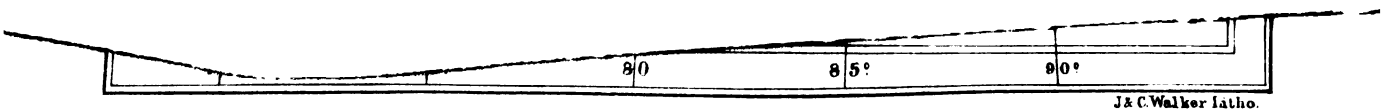

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LIFE

IN

ANCIENT INDIA.

BY

MRS. SPEIR.

With a Map, and Illustrations drawn on Wood by

GEORGE SCHARF, JUN., F.S.A.

"Es ist immer das Land der Sehnsucht gewesen, und erscheint uns noch als ein Wunderreich, als eine verzauberte Welt."—HEGEL, *Philosophie der Geschichte: Indien.*

LONDON:
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TO

H. H. WILSON, M.A., F.R.S.,

BODEN PROFESSOR OF SANSKRIT IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

This Volume is Dedicated

AS A

MARK OF RESPECT AND OBLIGATION.

M.808652

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PREFACE.

The idea of writing a little Book on Ancient India first occurred to me whilst residing for a few years with my late husband in Calcutta. The interest we felt in the country and its inhabitants led us to study this subject in standard European works; but from day to day discoveries were being made of coins, inscriptions, and manuscripts, which quite changed the leading features of all extant histories, and at the same time translations from Eastern sources continually appeared, attracting English readers to their study. Since that period the 'Indische Alterthumskunde' of Professor Lassen has brought under review the researches of the present age in Indian Archæology; but whilst voluminous in facts and rich in scientific analysis, his volumes offer no specimens or translations of the ancient literature of India, the charm of which has induced some of the first European scholars to devote their lives to its study and elucidation. When therefore,

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after an interval of many years, I recurred to the studies which I had formerly shared with Mr. Speir, I did not attempt to translate Lassen's Work, but aimed rather at making generally known whatever had been most attractive to myself, hoping thus to diffuse the interest I felt, and notify the sources from which further information might be drawn.

In fulfilling this design many friends have assisted me; and although I can mention here but few of those friends, I trust that all will believe me thankful. From the Libraries of the Asiatic Society and the East India House I have been liberally supplied with books for reference. To the kindness of Mr. H. T. Prinsep, Dr. Royle, and Mr. Norris I am indebted for encouragement and assistance in various ways; and for the valuable information, advice, and correction which Professor Wilson has most kindly given, I can but imperfectly express my thanks.

My obligations to amateur artists are more obvious, and will be especially acknowledged by all those who appreciate the sketches of my accomplished friend Mr. William Prinsep.

C. S.

Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park,
August, 1856.

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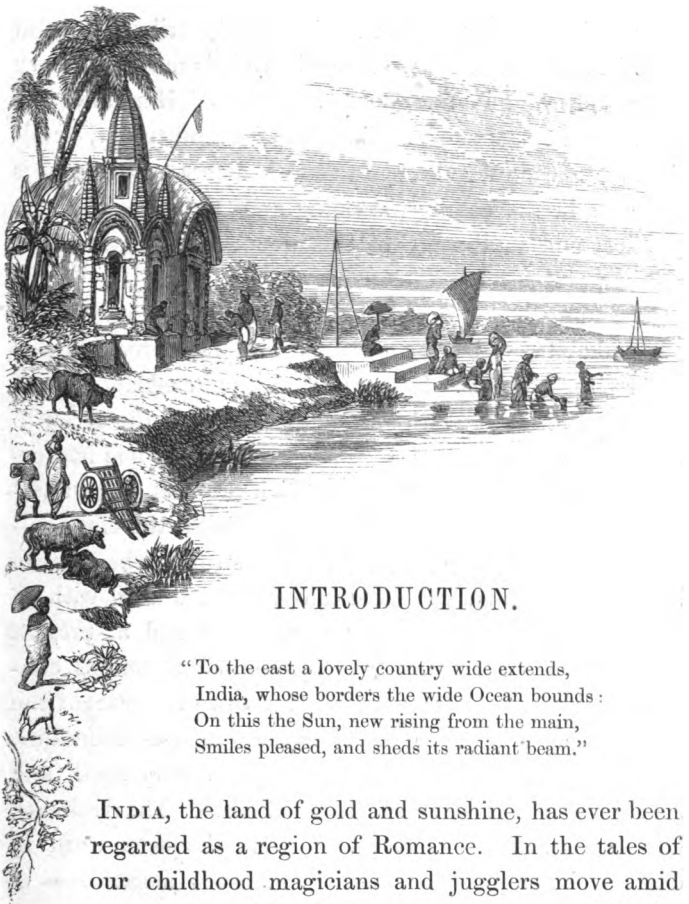

INTRODUCTION.

"To the east a lovely country wide extends,
India, whose borders the wide Ocean bounds:
On this the Sun, new rising from the main,
Smiles pleased, and sheds its radiant beam."

INDIA, the land of gold and sunshine, has ever been regarded as a region of Romance. In the tales of our childhood magicians and jugglers move amid scenes oppressed by the luscious scents, gay with the flowers, and sparkling with the precious gems and fabrics of India. In the classic page, India is the mysterious bourn to which point the fabulous expeditions of Bacchus and Sesostris; and when history emerges from primeval haze, we see India as the gorgeous eastern boundary of Earth,

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where princes enthroned on elephants offer tribute in solid gold. Nor is there less romance in India's natural history and geography; in the golden ant-hills of Herodotus, in the tree he notes as sheltering ten thousand troops, or his rivers too wide for the eye to reach across. Romance is inherent in the country, steeping even the science, metaphysics, and mythology of this wonderful country in its rainbow-tinted hues.

The name India is not that by which it is known to its own inhabitants, but is first met with in Herodotus and other Greek writers. It comes from the Sanskrit, *Sindhu*, ocean. First, the name was transferred from the ocean to the river, and then to the country and the people bordering the river, on the banks of which the first Hindu settlements were made. Indus, Ind, or Sindh, therefore signifies the river and adjacent country forming the western boundary of India. The Persians wrote the word with an H, but the Greeks omitted the aspirate; and at present we use both forms, only geographers and historians consider it more correct to limit Hindustan to that part of the country which lies to the north of the Vindhya Mountains, and to apply the name of India to the country north and south, from the Himalaya to Cape Comorin. The Arabians, not aware that Sindh and Hind were the same word in different languages, thought they were two descendants of Noah, who extended their settlements in this direction, and gave each his name to his own respective territories.*

To the north, India is bounded by the Himalaya Mountains, to the west by the Indus, and to the east by the Brahmaputra, but not strictly, for some of the Bengal pro-

* Lassen, 'Indische Alterthumskunde,' vol. i. pp. 2, 3.

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vinces stretch beyond; to the south it is a peninsula jutting out into the ocean. This vast territory is exceedingly varied, and details of its physical features, inhabitants, and governments, would furnish most interesting subjects for investigation; but a very slight sketch is alone admissible at present, and, in making this, we find it an assistance to separate India into four sections.

I. The Punjaub, Sindh, Rajputana, Malwa, Guzerat, and the Nerbudda River.

II. The Peninsula.

III. Plains of the Ganges.

IV. Bengal.

This must be acknowledged to be a somewhat arbitrary proceeding, but it has the advantage of introducing us, first, to the earliest haunts of the Sanskrit-speakers; second, to the coasts and forests earliest known to Hindu commerce and literature; third, to the scenes of most ancient Brahmanical celebrity; and fourth, to the focus of modern British wealth and government.

It might assist us in remembering these divisions, if we imagined India sketched out as the rude outline of a human figure; such a figure as that, for instance, of Orion or Aldebaran, in the maps of the stars. The Himalaya Mountains would be the head; Sindh, Malwa, etc. would be a bare right arm, with projecting ornaments and weapons; the Peninsula would give the bony legs, partially visible, as the Ghats of Southern India; the basin of the Ganges would represent smooth folds of drapery falling over the left arm; and, lastly, Bengal, with the Ganges divided into many streams, would be the hand of our figure, with extended fingers.

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I. The Punjaub down to the Nerbudda.

We begin then with the Punjaub, the border-land between India and many other countries; as India and Assyria, India and Persia, India and Bactria, and, we may almost say, between India and Tartary. At the present day it is occupied by a border population, made up of many races, with a mixed religion, half Hindu and half Mohammedan. The name Punjaub comes from *punj*, five, and *ab*, waters,—five rivers flowing through this district. Below the Punjaub the five streams unite as the Indus, which flows through Sindh, attended by a border of fertility, and forming a productive delta at its junction with the sea. Barren sand is however the characteristic not only of Sindh but of the contiguous countries towards the East. Here we find Jessalmere shining out as a green favoured island, and the fertile strip of Cutch stretching like a bridge between Sindh and Guzerat. A salt river, called the Looni, enriches Marwar, and, after a course of three hundred miles, is lost in the Run of Cutch, a fen formed by its deposits and those of other salt streams from the desert of Dhat. This Run, or marsh, which is a hundred and fifty miles in length and about seventy in breadth, has but one green spot for the refreshment of travellers or their camels. In the dry season it is one great glaring sheet of salt, full of quicksands, and subject to mirage, called "winter castles" by the Rajpoot inhabitants. During the rains the dazzling crystal melts, and presents a dreary spectacle of dirty water, through which the camels wade, even to their saddle-girths.

To the eastward again of these deserts we find the

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Aravalli Hills, and "immediately in front of the broadest part stands the noble mountain of Aboo, rising as abruptly from the sandy plain," says Mr. Fergusson, "as an island from the ocean. It seems," he continues, "one vast bubble of granite, that has boiled up from the bottom of what then was the sea, the summit of which, in cooling, has sunk back on itself, forming a valley on its summit, six or eight miles long, which offers a most enchanting contrast to the deserts below." Our author doubts, indeed, if the whole world contains another spot so exquisitely beautiful as the little "Jewel Lake" on the summit of Mount Aboo.*

Sir John Malcolm has gathered all the lands immediately eastward of Sindh into a group, which he calls Central India. It comprehends nearly eight degrees of latitude and nine of longitude, and has a superficial area of 350,000 square miles. Jessalmere and Marwar are the level portions, whilst Ajmere, Oodeypore, and Malwa, etc., form a table-land 2000 feet above the level of the sea, of which the Aravalli Hills are the western and the Vindhyas the southern rampart. This lofty plateau has two declivities; one from west to east, towards the Betwa River, and the other from south to north, towards the Jumna. The Aravalli chain, so distinguished a feature in Central India, is remarkable for its peaks of rose-coloured quartz, and the dazzling slates and schists, which furnish roofs for houses and temples. The insulated hills in the same district are formed of sandstone, capped with ironstone and basalt. Sangor, Chittore, Ajmere, etc., are natural fortresses of this description, requiring little aid from art beyond a low parapet round the top; and sandstone is so abundant, that

* Fergusson's 'Ancient Architecture of Hindustan,' p. 39.

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whole towns may be seen in which the poorest houses are built of pure white freestone.

The climate of this lofty region is remarkable for salubrity, the air dry and invigorating, and the precious annual rains secured by intercepting hills and towns. From the earliest times Malwa has produced luxuriant crops of cotton, wheat, sugar, vegetable oils, and ginger; and to these may now be added tobacco and opium. In 1847–8 the produce of opium was 1,638,000 lbs., and in 1848–9 this quantity was nearly doubled, or about three million pounds.* But many as are the attractions of Central India, it was until lately but little known. Bishop Heber found many parts destitute of roads, or, if any road had been attempted, it was a mere track, impassable for wheeled carriages, and leading through such deep gullies and steep ravines, as rendered roads impossible. The perpetual warfare and lawless condition of its inhabitants presented yet greater difficulties to a traveller; and the country was becoming year by year more desolate, until, in 1818, Sir John Malcolm undertook its government. Then within five years the whole aspect of things changed: "it was made worth while to acquire industrious habits," and, says Bishop Heber, "from a wilderness it was changed into a garden."

The same happy effect has followed from good government in Mairwara, a district of Ajmere, lying in the Aravalli Hills, to the north of Mount Aboo. About one hundred miles in length and twenty-five or thirty in breadth, Mairwara, though small, has become justly celebrated as the theatre of noble and successful experiments. When first it came into the possession of the British, it was the abode and

* M'Culloch's Commercial Dictionary, article *Opium*.

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resort of lawless freebooters,—a place in which female infants were destroyed, wives and widowed mothers sold by husbands and sons, and where life and property required the protection of arms and fortifications. In unequal portions it was divided between the East India Company, Jodpore, and Oodeypore, and the consent of the two native States was necessary before it could be placed under British management. Happily this was obtained, and Colonel Hall was appointed to the charge of the district in 1822. His first measure was to form a local battalion, in which the youthful Mairs learned discipline, and to attach themselves to a Government which treated them with confidence and kindness. This body of native troops, ready to coerce the refractory, added materially to Colonel Hall's good influence; predatory habits were reformed, infanticide ceased, and the slavery of women greatly decreased. One of Mairwara's chief misfortunes was deficiency of water; having no river, it depends entirely upon the annual rains, which come down from the hills in torrents. These were soon exhausted, and the crops, in consequence, most precarious. To remedy this evil, Colonel Hall had seven great tanks made or repaired; but in 1835 his labours were interrupted by ill-health, and he quitted India. His successor was Colonel Dixon, under whose beneficent superintendence improvements have yet more abounded. He induced the people to sink wells, to throw earthen embankments across hollows, to erect stone dykes to retain the rain-water on the soil, and to cultivate waste lands. Within twelve years jungles were cleared, one hundred and six new hamlets located in their place, a town called Nya Nugger built as a mart for commerce, an annual fair established,

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and wells and waterworks innumerable completed, some of these being works of considerable skill and expense. The contiguous little state of Ajmere has shared in these improvements, sympathy becoming established between the authorities and the cultivators, litigiousness ceasing, and industry generally prevailing; so that in 1848 Ajmeer was no longer an abode of banditti, but bidding fair to rival Mairwara in peace and prosperity. The minute attention here bestowed upon these districts is out of all proportion to the momentary glance given to larger territories; but the temptation is, that Malwa under Sir John Malcolm, and Mairwara under Colonel Dixon, stand out as most encouraging examples of what Anglo-Saxon government and Christian civilization can effect in the wildest parts of India.

We must now proceed to Guzerat, a province considerably varied in appearance. The eastern coast of Kattiwar is strewn with boulders of granite, rounded as by the action of water; amongst these some light-coloured granite peaks arise, which are supposed to mark the site of the celebrated missing city of Valabhi. After flourishing under the Gupta kings for some centuries since our era, it was swallowed up by the sea, and, owing to volcanic action, its remains are now discovered further inland than its original site.

Trees are deficient in this sandy district, the chief produce of which is the coarse kinds of grain, upon which horses thrive, the Kattiwar horses being much in demand for the British cavalry. In the western portion of this peninsula vegetation is luxuriant, and the banyan-trees gigantic, especially that famous specimen called the Cubbeer

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Burr, which has a circumference measuring eighteen hundred feet. Mangoes are abundant, and particular ledges of rock at Girnar are named the "One Thousand" and the "Hundred Thousand," from the numbers of their mango-trees. Guzerat is also rich in cities and in a sea-coast favourable to commerce, and has such resources, that in the reign of the Emperor Akber (A.D. 1556 to 1586) it maintained 67,375 cavalry and 8900 infantry.

We have now arrived at the scenes of most interesting incidents in the Mahratta wars, and it is very tempting to touch upon modern history, but we must refrain; Ancient India is our appointed subject, and our present ramble is merely permitted as an introduction to the country in which old Veda worshippers, venerable Brahmans, and original Buddhists once lived and flourished. We want at present to learn geographical features, and must not therefore omit to note that the lord of the floods in Central India is the Chumbul, which, rising in Malwa, flows toward the north. It is at first much impeded by rocks and shallows, but, after breaking through the Mokundra range into Harrowti, it becomes a fine deep stream, and runs a course of above five hundred miles. Malwa is bounded to the south by the Vindhya Hills, which stretch all across the centre of India, separating the peninsula from Hindustan. This mountain-chain seldom rises higher than 2000 feet, and several cities in Malwa have been built nearly at this height, Indore being 1998 feet above the level of the sea, and Neemutch 1476 feet; but at the south the declivity is precipitous, and gives the hills the character of a buttress or rampart protecting Malwa, at the bottom of which flows the river Nerbudda (or Narmada, from *narma*, pleasure,

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and *da*, she who bestows). This is a beautiful stream, with wild romantic banks of white marble, sandstone, and other craggy rocks, which sometimes impede its course and send it foaming down in cataracts. The Nerbudda is much loved by the Hindus, and not being navigable, the superstitions attached to it remain unshaken by the tide of commercial enterprise. Colonel Sleeman, who was long resident at Jubbulpore, observed a marked difference between the degree of enlightenment of the natives worshipping the Nerbudda and those living near the Ganges, and observed that, whilst the Ganges yearly loses somewhat of its sacred character, the Nerbudda as constantly gains increase of sanctity, and the stories told seventy years ago by Forbes are repeated by Sleeman as the favourite traditions of the present period. One of these is not without beauty and interest, as exhibiting the playful fancy and vivid personification pervading the religious conceptions of the region. It is briefly as follows:—

The river Sone courted the Nerbudda in the high lands of Omerkuntuk, in which they both take their rise. The rivers slowly advanced to meet each other, when the Nerbudda, getting impatient, sent the little stream Jhola, the barber's daughter, to report upon the appearance of the bridegroom. The Sone supposed Jhola to be the bride, and fell in love with her accordingly, whereat the Nerbudda became enraged, and turning short round to the west, has flowed ever since in that direction, forming splendid cataracts sometimes four hundred feet in depth; at times she expands into a broad stream, and then again contracts herself within walls not more than a hundred feet apart. As she approaches the sea her turbulence is calmed, and, flow-

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ing placidly through Guzerat, she reaches the ocean in the Gulf of Cambay; whereas had she joined her false suitor, the Sone, she would with him have joined the Ganges near Patna, and thus have made her way to the Bay of Bengal. This river is still talked of and thought of by Hindus as a real being,—"not," Colonel Sleeman observes, "as a representation of Deity, but as itself a power and intelligence; and," he adds, "it is only in India that we can understand how every individual of a whole community of many millions can address a fine river as a living being, a sovereign princess, who hears and understands all they say, and exercises a kind of local superintendence over their affairs, without a single temple in which her image is worshipped, or a single priest to profit by the delusion."*

Both the Vindhya and the lower range called the Satpoora Hills contain extensive beds of coal and iron beneath sandstone, thus offering facilities for the spirit of engineering that distinguishes our era. The valleys are rich with a soil of decomposed basalt, much of which is unfortunately washed away each year by the rains and lost in the sea.

II. The Peninsula.

We have now entered upon our second section or division, the whole country below the Vindhya Hills being reckoned by geographers as the Peninsula. This is called by the Hindus themselves Dekkan, meaning in Sanskrit south (*Dakshin*); but in common European discourse the word Dekkan is now more frequently restricted to the high table-land, the centre of the peninsula between the river Tapti and the Kistnah. This peninsula, or Dekkan,

* Rambles and Recollections, vol. i. ch. 3.

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is divided from the north by well-marked boundaries. We have already noticed the Vindhya Hills, and the river Nerbudda at their base. To the south of the Nerbudda rise the Satpoora Hills, and to the south of this second range flows the river Tapti, thus completing the fourfold girdle thrown around the waist of India. The Satpoora Mountains are scarcely so lofty as the Vindhya, and are similar in geological structure, but have a bolder outline, and rise into peaks, the highest of which, "about 2500 feet above the sea, consists of amygdaloid and greenstone (which composes more than half the hill), and at the top basalt."* This same formation of basalt, obtruded into older strata, extends from the Aravalli Hills, a little south of Agra, through Central India and the Peninsula, down to Cape Comorin.

It is a marked feature of Southern India that the coast on each side is bordered by lofty mountains, from 4000 to 6000 feet in height. They rise with abrupt declivities one above another, like a succession of walls or terraces, with bold well-defined outlines. This appearance of gigantic steps leading from the table-land of the interior down to the sea-coast, has given the hills the name of Ghats, because they resemble the handsome flight of steps called Ghats which are built on the banks of rivers and tanks for the convenience of Hindu daily worship. On the western coast the Ghats are higher, and here they approach within forty or fifty miles of the sea. The narrow strip of country thus left along the coast is divided into several distinct districts. From Surat to a distance below Bombay it is called the Northern and Southern Concans; below these we find

* Hamilton's Gazetteer, vol. ii. p. 510.

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Canara, containing the famous Portuguese settlement of Goa. It is about this point, midway between Cambay and Travancore, that the hills attain their greatest elevation of 6000 feet; and in the alpine region of Coorg, above Mangalore, grows the finest sandal-wood, equally prized in modern as in ancient times. The Sandal is an elegant tree, which can be cultivated in the plains, where it attains a considerable size, but the wood is inferior, and has little scent compared with that produced upon the hills.

To the south of Canara the Malabar coast extends until it is lost in the district of Cochin; sometimes indeed the whole western coast is called Malabar, but not when aiming at geographical accuracy. The climate of this coast is delightfully cooled by sea-breezes; and Baroche, Surat, Bombay, Mangalore, Tellicherry, etc. are, in consequence, favourite places of European residence. Calicut and Ponani, in the south, are among the towns from which considerable exports are made, chiefly of pepper, which is extensively cultivated, the vines being trained over mango and jack-fruit trees on the lower ledges of the hills. In the plains rice is grown, and far up the mountains, at a height of from 2000 to 4000 feet, grows the best teak timber, far above any town or village, and difficult to remove after it has been felled. The woodcutters are obliged to spend the winter and the early part of the year in these lonely forests, that the timber may be ready for the rains of June and July, this being the only period at which the mountain-streams are sufficiently full to float it down. A break occurs in the hills at Ponani, through which the river Ponani takes its course, and is joined by many smaller streams and torrents which come directly from the teak district. The

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same forests produce a variety of other large timber-trees the names and qualities of which are not fully known, although some of them are occasionally used by the Calicut ship-builders; but the present opinion is that teak alone fully repays all the difficulty and expense of export to other countries.

South of Ponani the Ghats again rise, extending their chain through Cochin and Travancore to the extreme point of Cape Comorin. The scenery of this southern district is generally beautiful, but of Anjengo and Quilon Forbes* writes in perfect raptures: the hills, the woods, the flowers, all contributing to the enchantment, and even the abundance of land-crabs and of lizards, with bright scarlet caps, assisting to give it a peculiar character. Amongst flowers Forbes particularly mentions the *Gloriosa superba* as growing everywhere like a weed which cannot be exterminated. This magnificent creeper is found in the forests of the Western as well as of the Eastern Ghats; its flowers, when first blown, are of a pale greenish colour, which the next day changes to a splendid scarlet. Although a lily, with reflex petals like the Turk's-cap, it climbs to the tops of lofty trees, and is one of the most striking objects in an Indian forest.

The ports of Cochin and Allapee are chiefly important owing to their ship-building and exportation of teak timber. These are the only towns of any consideration in the extreme south, over which great forests full of elephants and other wild animals appear and spread; but less is known of this corner of the land than even of other parts of India.

Returning then to Ponani, we shall find that where the

* Forbes, 'Oriental Memoirs.'

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Western Ghats break away from the south they retreat, as it were, backwards, and join the hills which have come down the eastern coast of the peninsula, as if Ponani had once been intended to be the southern limit of India, or as if an earthquake had broken off Cape Comorin and patched it on again below the Nilgherry and Wynaad Mountains, which form the southern extremity of the Eastern Ghats. These hills are further removed from the sea than those on the west coast, and leave room for the plains of the Carnatic, which are hotter than any other place in India; but as they present a soil peculiarly favourable for the cultivation of rice, they were early inhabited by Hindus from Northern India, and the whole country is rich in ruins of ancient magnificence, which existed many centuries before the unfortunate Nabobs of Arcot and Nellore had commenced the acquisition or display of that distinguished wealth which caused their ruin.

To the south-east of the Carnatic lies the island of Ceylon, said to be composed almost exclusively of primitive rocks, and to show no traces of a volcano; it abounds in rivers, and is celebrated for its cinnamon gardens and for the size and profusion of its cocoas and talipot palms. The climate is so moderate that roses, mignonette, and pinks are almost as sweet as in England, whilst all the splendid lilies of the tropics grow wild. Coffee plantations succeed well, and coffee-trees of great age and size are numerous: they were introduced into the island by the Dutch, and were at first cultivated for their flowers.

In the earliest days Ceylon was celebrated for its pearl-fishery, the pearls being whiter than those in the Gulf of Ormuzd; but for eight years past there have been no pearls,

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and apparently in consequence of what was intended as a boon. Between Ceylon and the coast of India runs a reef of rocks, some of which being below water, allow unloaded ships to sail over them; but since it was very inconvenient to unload and reload, or to make the circuit of the island, instead of going through the Straits of Manaar, it was proposed to blast the rocks and deepen the passage. This commenced, and the oysters appeared to receive it as a signal to quit, for never since have pearls been found on Rama's Bridge; but a more matter-of-fact interpretation is that the fisheries had been too frequent, and the exhausted oysters ceased in consequence to form pearls. Three years is ascertained to be the shortest allowable interval; and so long as this rule is adhered to, it is not believed that the passage of ships through the Straits will at all interfere with the prosperity or productiveness of the oyster colony.

To the north of Madras and Nellore is the mouth of the Kistnah, the river upon which Haiderabad is placed; and above this flows the Godavery, the source of which is far away on the other side of India, making the town of Nassik a place of peculiar sanctity. To the north of Godavery extends the province of Orissa, in which we shall find the black pagodas and the temple of Juggunnat; and to the west of Orissa, on the high land between the Ghats, is the province of Gondwana, a great part of which consists of dense forests yet unreclaimed. From Gondwana we pass into Bundelkund, a division of Allahabad, and thus we arrive at the third of our arbitrary sections of India.

But before entering upon the more open, civilized, and cultivated lands of Upper India and Bengal, we must notice the remnants of primitive inhabitants which still linger in

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the woods and fastnesses of Central India and the Peninsula. Schlegel observes that "in the background of old, mighty, and civilized nations we can almost always trace the primeval inhabitants of the country, who, dispossessed of their territory, have been reduced to servitude by their conquerors, or have gradually been incorporated with them. These primitive inhabitants, when compared with their later or more civilized conquerors, appear in general rude and barbarous; though we find among them a certain number of ancient customs and arts which by no means tend to confirm the notion of an original and universal savage state of nature." Such people may still be seen in India, sometimes half hidden by the hills and forests, "hanging like a fringe," as Professor Lassen says, "upon the borders of the cultivated plains." Small in stature, with little eyes and flat noses, they have no caste, although extensively divided and subdivided into clans and tribes, and no idols, although their superstitions are various. They are not without industry and ingenuity, and their mountain-huts often possess a considerable air of comfort. They are a people without a history and without a formed language; and, having been obliged to recede before the superior force and intelligence of the Hindus, or Aryan race, they have taken refuge in dense forests or on barren rocks, and have fallen in many cases far below the grade to which they had previously attained. This race is now widely scattered and divided, and the Gonds, the Bheels, the Koolies, and the other people of whom it is composed, have nothing in common, and cannot understand each other's dialect or jargon. The Koolies in Guzerat are a tall, athletic race particularly black. The Bheels in Malwa are also black, but short in stature, with

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thick rugged hair and beards. The Bheels are the most important and numerous of all the aboriginal tribes, and are mentioned by Sir John Malcolm* with much consideration. He regrets that their dispersion over "rugged mountains, their extreme ignorance and prejudices, and their repugnance to confidential intercourse with all but their own tribe," have prevented our obtaining any full or correct knowledge of their history. When conquered and driven south by the Rajputs, some became desperate freebooters; but others quietly submitted, and live now amongst their conquerors, partly as cultivators of the soil and partly as village watchmen. Their chief religion seems to consist in propitiatory offerings and sacrifices to the minor Hindu deities, whom they especially invoke to save them from small-pox. They eat the flesh not only of buffaloes, but also of cows when it can be obtained, and are particularly fond of intoxicating drinks; often however both food and drink are wholly derived from the flowers and fruit of the Mahua-tree (*Bassia latifolia*), a timber-tree of moderate size, which abounds in the forests of Malwa. The flowers are of a pale pink colour, and when dried resemble raisins in flavour and appearance. The fruit—a small nut, containing an astringent oil—is palatable when roasted, and the fleshy calyx is pressed and fermented into a spirituous liquor.† The Bheels have among themselves many traces of former importance, and assert that their leaders have been as much distinguished by character as by wealth. At Neemuch, Bishop Heber says, the Rajputs virtually acknowledge that most of their principal cities and fortresses were founded

* Malcolm's Central India.

† Elphinstone's History of India, pp. 6, 193.

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by Bheel chiefs; and a custom is said to exist, by which a Rajput on attaining power or office is marked in the forehead with blood taken from the heel or thumb of a Bheel. Owing to various changes in their condition they are now divided into several classes, more or less civilized. Some lead a half-savage life, shooting from amongst the long grass with bows and arrows, which they hold with their feet. Their bows are made of split bamboos, and the arrows are the same, but with iron heads; of bamboos also they construct their huts, with neat projecting roofs, and doors with hinges similar to the lid of a basket. Although very uncultivated, and often a drunken, thievish set, Sir John Malcolm gives them credit for some virtues in which the polished Hindus are deficient: their word is more to be depended on, and the position of their women is superior. In all the recent reforms the Bheel women have acted a prominent part, and have invariably been the advocates of order and industry. In Guzerat Bheels and Koolies are uniformly preferred for the service of the police, and as *durwans* to watch at the gates of gentlemen's houses and gardens. There are Bheels also in Candeish, south of the Nerbudda; and this tribe had the good fortune, between 1825 and 1835, to be under the civilizing influences of Colonel Outram, who, after sufficient severity to convince them of British strength, went amongst them unarmed, and excited their enthusiasm by his skill and activity in hunting; and lastly, in conjunction with Colonel Ovens, he taught them to obey law, and submit to be trained into a regularly organized local militia.

In Gondwana and south of the Nerbudda we find the

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Gonds, who inhabit the rocky banks of rivers and forests which are almost inaccessible. They are jet-black, dirty, and forbidding in appearance, short in stature, with small noses, thick lips, broad foreheads, and little deep-set red eyes, black teeth and hair, which is described as in some cases long and black, but occasionally red, and almost woolly; making a near approach to the Negro type of the Austral-Indians and the natives of the Andaman Islands. Some of the Gonds are quite uncovered, others, living in the neighbourhood of a more advanced people, become a little civilized; but in general they lead a life of poverty, dwelling in miserable huts, surrounded by their swine, and buffaloes if so fortunate as to possess them, and poultry, in the rearing of which they excel. They are said to be a quiet people, inoffensive, with the exception of their occasional custom of child-stealing; their rude perverted notion of religion seeming to consist in nothing beyond the worship of demons, to whom children were supposed to be a necessary offering. They have no priests, and pay no reverence to Brahmans.

Gondwana verges on Orissa, parts of which are inhabited by three different tribes of Aborigines,—Khonds, Koles, and Sourahs. With the Khonds of the hills the British Government first came into close contact in 1835, when waging war with the rebellious Rajah of Goomsur. When the war ceased, Captain Macpherson was employed to make surveys; and being at a subsequent period appointed to suppress human sacrifices amongst the Khonds, he was enabled to acquire accurate and detailed information concerning their dreadful superstitions, and this he has embodied in a valuable contribution to the Royal Asiatic

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Society's Journal, published in the spring of 1852. Captain Macpherson takes away all the softening veils which ignorance usually interposes between ourselves and the religious customs of rude heathens, and exhibits human sacrifice and female infanticide as parts of a long-established worship; recognizing first a Supreme Deity, and secondly, a female spirit created by the Supreme Deity, but which had turned evil, had rebelled herself, and had induced mankind to rebel, and to worship her with human sacrifice. The victims offered to this evil goddess are called Meriahs: they must be the absolute property of those who offer them, and are usually stolen, or bought whilst children from other aboriginal tribes, or from impoverished Hindus; but some instances occur in which the Khonds themselves sell their children. The victims are led blindfold into the village, and lodged at the house of the chief—in fetters, if grown-up, but if children they are allowed to go free; and there are usually so many of them as to give each a reasonable hope that he may never be required in sacrifice. These unfortunate youths are reared with every indulgence, being considered as more divine than human, and few cases occur of their attempting to escape; because whilst the chances are fearfully against success, they are taught that if they die as victims they are certain of happiness hereafter, but if they escape they are certain to die by dire disease and to have no future bliss. These horrid sacrifices are only made on occasions of unusual calamity: they are accompanied by drunken feasting and frantic dances; and " in some parts of Goomsur where this practice prevails, small rude images of beasts and birds in clay and wood are made in great numbers for this festival and

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stuck on poles,—a practice the origin or meaning of which is not at all clear."*

The "Meriahs," or victims, may be either boys or girls, and of any race, except, Captain Macpherson thinks, Brahmans, who are supposed to have been already devoted to the gods. Many of the pleasing, intelligent little girls in Mrs. Wilson's Orphan Refuge School, near Calcutta, had been rescued by the British army from this dreadful fate, and the daring escape of others has been the theme of song. One sect amongst the Khonds abhors human sacrifice, but equally with the other tribes believes in Boora Pennu, the supreme god; and in Tari Pennu, the perverse earth-goddess, who is jealous of the human race, impedes the government of Boora Pennu, causes every description of evil, and must be invoked with deep awe and reverence.

More gentle forest tribes are described as inhabiting the southern extremity of the Peninsula. Mr. Taylor, of Madras, mentions several in the Dindigul district who possess bows and arrows, but appear to live chiefly on roots, honey, and reptiles; and the eminent botanist Roxburgh alludes to equally poor denizens of the neighbouring Wynaad hills, whose clothing is made from the bark of a tree named *Sterculia guttata*.† But the most interesting and pleasing of all the Indian aborigines are the Tudas, inhabiting the Nilgherry Hills, where they were discovered about thirty years ago. The unwholesome jungle at the base of these hills probably prevented their being earlier explored, for although in 1819 Mr. Leschenhault succeeded in ascending from the Coimbatore side to the west near Ponani, he speaks of the route as scarcely practicable, owing to thorny shrubs, tigers, bears, and wild dogs.

* J. R. A. S. vol. xiii. part 2, p. 247. † Roxb. vol. iii. p. 148.

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Having once got through these savage lines of defence, he no sooner found himself in the upper regions than he was astonished, as all other travellers have been, by "the noble race of natives" inhabiting the Naad district. They are called Tudas, or Tomwars, or Thodawars. They are a tall, athletic people, with fine symmetric features, described as Roman, but some amongst them are said to have a Jewish cast of features.* Dwelling at a height of 7000 or 8000 feet above the level of the sea, in an atmosphere cooled and refreshed by the monsoon, they enjoy a climate of perpetual spring; and the consequent great salubrity is supposed to account, in some degree, for their superior physical appearance, which is unexampled amongst tribes not boasting of Sanskrit (Aryan or Hindu) origin. Unfortunately the tribe is very small, and constantly diminishing, and does not appear to number above six hundred men. They keep flocks and herds, the men attending to the dairy; and they till the ground, raising crops of wheat, barley, oats, and several other kinds of grain.

Other travellers speak of the Tudas as having large full speaking eyes, pleasing form, and long fine hair, parted on the crown of the head and falling on all sides in natural locks, a grave, composed bearing, cheerful temper, and herculean strength.† The Chola and other Nilgherry tribes look up to the Tudas as their lords and superiors; and the Curumbars, who are a wretched-looking people, of small stature, thin hair, and watery eyes, are said to be nearly allied in race, and to derive their present abject appearance from misery caused by the oppression of more fortunate tribes. The Curumbars thus exhibit the condition of a people fallen from comparative civilization, which

* Hough's Letters, p. 63.

† Harkness.

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is the worst fate that history depicts, for people thus fallen are usually exhausted and hopeless; and this is in general true of all the aboriginal tribes in India. One peculiarity observed amongst the Tudas is their tumuli, of which we shall have occasion to speak hereafter: some of these are marked by circles of rude stones on a level with the ground, whilst around others the stones are larger, and raised two or three feet; similar tombs are often met with, where there is no remnant of either people or towns to which they can be traced, and we can only suppose that they are monuments of races in some degree allied to the yet existing Gonds and Tudas. There are still current in the Peninsula of India several languages which, although largely intermixed with Sanskrit terms in consequence of Hindu conquest and civilization, are nevertheless of a distinct family of language. They are chiefly the Tamul, the Telinga, the Karnata, and the Malaya: collectively they are called Tamul languages; and the growing opinion of our guides in ethnology and philology is, that the rude remnant of hill and forest tribes, and the comparatively civilized inhabitants of Nagpore and the Malabar coast, etc., may be classed together as people who did not speak Sanskrit, and had not the Aryan and Indo-European conformation; people, in fact, more nearly allied with Scyths than with Hindus.

III. Plains of the Ganges.

But we are lingering too long in woods and wilds, and must hasten to travel up to the open country intervening between the Himalaya and the Vindhya Hills, where lie the fertile plains, which we ventured to represent as smooth

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folds of drapery, covering the left arm of our ideal India. These rich plains are well watered by the Ganges, its allies and tributaries, and are free comparatively from wood or jungle; although they have been under cultivation probably two thousand years, they are still luxuriant, and their productiveness requires little aid from art. Amongst the crops now raised are wheat and rice, indigo and ginger, sugar and cotton, roses, jessamine, and sweet grasses; and the trees are the oleander, magnolia, *Butea frondosa*, *Erythrina*, and others innumerable, of equal scent or beauty.

In these highly favoured plains, we do not look in vain for signs of ancient India's most prosperous towns, some of which were on sites now occupied by Oude, on the river Gogra; Kanoge, sixty-five miles west-north-west from Lucknow; Delhi, on the Jumna; and Allahabad, at the point where the Jumna and the Ganges join; and then descending the Ganges, we come to Benares, early celebrated as a school of learning, and a little lower down to Patna (the ancient Palibothra), not far from the junction of the Sone with the Ganges, and to Rajagriha in Bahar, a district famous for hot springs and holy shrines throughout Hindustan. One chief attraction of a town or village is a large and handsome tank, having in the centre of each side a wide flight of steps, surmounted by a portico. The porticoes are lofty covered gates, and with the steps attached are called Ghats, and are not only ornamental, but almost necessary to Hindu worship. Worshippers are required to bathe daily once or oftener, and after being exposed in the water to the full rays of a vertical sun, they seek the shelter of the portico to recite their prayers. To the Ghat also women come at noon and eventide, to fill their water-jars; and

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here they congregate, and enjoy a daily laugh and chat, so that a Ghat in India might almost be said to represent the village-green of England, as the place at which the neighbourhood holds its social gatherings or conversations. Amongst the singularities of Indian produce are the water-plants, which overspread the lakes and tanks; one of these, flowering in the rainy season, is called *Singhara*;* it has long stringy leaves and pure white flowers, which, like the *Victoria regina*, only expand late in the afternoon. The nuts or seeds of this plant are wholesome food, and so highly esteemed by the natives, that tanks in which it grows let for £10 or £14 per annum. The birds and flowers, the mountains, the animals, the rivers and the boats belonging to this region, are scarcely less interesting than its trees and towns. The little flycatcher sparkles in the sunshine as though its feathers were a glossy fabric shot with green and gold; peacocks flock into every cornfield, and in the same scene with birds of brilliant plumage, splendid flowers, sweet-scented grasses, and colossal trees, we have the elephant and the rhinoceros, the camel and the buffalo, and we might add the tortoise, the lizard, and the monkey. In the middle ground of our landscape stretches a dense line of forest, beneath which the fantastic epiphytes and air-plants sport their fairy forms; and above the forest, rising apparently in endless ranges, are seen the summits of the Himalaya, bearing their perpetual snowy mantles from 20,000 to 30,000 feet above the level of the sea.†

* Mrs. Hervey notices these plants as growing for miles together, in the lakes of Kashmir. *Sing*, she says, means horn, these water-nuts being horned.—Adventures in Tartary, vol. i. pp. 234–8. *Trapa bispinosa*, Roxb., vol. i. p. 428.

† Sleeman's 'Rambles and Recollections,' vol. i. p. 101.

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IV. Bengal.

Gradually the plains of Hindustan lose their dry, free, open character. In Bengal, the Rajmahal Hills intrude, standing like piquets in advance of their main body, the Vindhya range; and here also the Ganges separates into several streams, three of which, the Jellinghy, the Bhagirathi, and the Martabanga, required at one time the constant attention of an engineer, who was called "Superintendent of the three Rivers," and whose annual occupation it was to repair the damage caused by the rains. The varying courses of the rivers is, indeed, one of the most striking features of Indian geography. In the rainy season a boat may sail over fields which but lately produced crops of cotton or indigo, and which the next season will probably produce the same; lands subject to inundation are even preferred for indigo-crops, although risk is run that the rains may come too soon and wash the whole away. Moisture, as well as heat, promotes the growth of this little trefoil; but the perfection of its seed requires a drier atmosphere than that of Bengal, and planters are in the habit of using seed ripened in the more westerly provinces. Below the Rajmahal Hills, Bengal is a perfect flat; and strictly speaking this district is not included in Hindustan, but still less does it belong to the Dekkan. It is a moist, alluvial soil, through which the Ganges flows in innumerable separate streams, one of these being the Hoogly, upon which Calcutta stands. All around the Bay of Bengal, for forty or fifty miles inland, the general character of the country is that of marshes, through which the mouths of the Ganges pour themselves into the sea. But

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these marshes are not like marshes in Europe, merely overgrown with reeds and rushes: the reeds of the Sunderbunds are bamboos, seventy feet high, lightly feathering above lofty trees of rich and heavy foliage, and thickly hemmed in below by an overgrown brushwood, infested by tigers. In some parts the ground is cleared for the manufacture of saltpetre and common salt, with which the whole soil is strongly impregnated, the basis being sand, with a substratum of clay and salt. Advancing inland, plantations of rice begin to appear, and the rivers, branching into numerous streams called Nullahs, make it easy to lay the fields periodically under water, and give the irrigation necessary for rice-crops. All vegetable produce is most abundant, and the lofty cocoa-nut, tamarind, jack-fruit, and many others, yielding the natives daily food, grow freely by the wayside. The plantain, with its broad leaves torn by the wind,* and the picturesque custard-apple, surround the native huts, whilst melons, gourds, and French beans overgrow the thatched roofs, and cover them with flowers. In Hindustan the native huts are built on open ground in compact towns or villages, and with tiled roofs; but in Bengal the roofs are covered with thatch, and whilst each cottage is separate, the whole village usually straggles through a jungle or thicket, the approach to which is by a narrow winding path, with high banks and hedges on each side, keeping out the little air that may be stirring, but so contrived apparently in order to prevent intrusion. These huts are very picturesque when seen singly, peeping from amongst their plantains and papaws and rose-apples, etc.; but in the outskirts of Calcutta, where they

* Called by the Arabs, ostrich feathers.

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are necessarily crowded together, they look poor and comfortless, and are subject to continual conflagrations, which may be seen in the hot weather, illuminating the sky for seven or eight miles' distance.

Bengal is little mentioned in ancient Sanskrit literature; for the earliest Hindu merchants had their seaports on the eastern coast, and the earliest learned Brahmans held their schools or fixed their huts within sight of the mighty Himavat. Bengal cannot therefore boast of ancient buildings; but it has both temples and ruins in abundance, for a very few years will suffice to produce venerable-looking ruins in so moist an atmosphere; and these temples, some extensive, and others consisting of a single shrine, some shining in white plaster at the head of steps leading down to the river, and others placed in the picturesque seclusion of a grove, add greatly to the beauty of Bengal, which is a province by no means deficient in interest; but as it claims no special attention to archæology or ethnology, mineralogy or zoology, it leaves us free to note in passing the noble character of Indian trees. The most beautiful, and one of the best beloved both in ancient and modern times, is the *Jonesia Asoka*, which grows all over Hindustan, but may be seen in several gardens near Calcutta, and in the highest perfection in the Botanic Gardens, opposite Garden Reach.* It is the height of a moderate horse-chestnut, thick in foliage, and literally covered with heads of red flowers resembling the *Ixora;* only the colour is

* Mr. Fortune, in his second voyage to the East, saw the *Jonesia Asoka* in the Botanic Garden of Calcutta, and admired it more even than the splendid *Amherstia*, and is sure that, were it well known in England, fine specimens would be produced at our metropolitan flower-shows.—Tea Districts of China, p. 360.

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more brilliant than even that of the *Ixora*, for it is not a fixed red, but every petal shades from scarlet into orange, and from the centre of each floret issue long red tassel-like anthers. The flowers are fragrant at night, which the Hindu poets do not fail to note, and they are so pre-eminently radiant, that for a gem to sparkle as the asoka-flower is not an uncommon image in Sanskrit poetry.

Another tree common all over India, bearing delicious-scented white flowers, is called by the natives Bakula, and by botanists *Mimusops Elengi*. It grows in many gardens near Calcutta, and also on the noble Barrackpore road made by Lord Wellesley, where splendid specimens of flowering-trees may be seen on either side. The *Adansonia*, celebrated as the largest tree the world produces, may also be seen in the Calcutta Botanic Gardens, where a tree not more than twenty-five years old was eighteen feet in circumference. These trees bear long flowers, snowy white, shaped like the *Datura*, but larger, which look most lovely, hanging as they do from the thick branches of a prodigious tree of soft wood, and of such awkward and clumsy aspect that the natives call it *gudd* (donkey). The teak, the sandalwood, the mahogany, and most of the trees for which India is famed, may be seen within the compass of this beautiful garden; but none of these timber-trees are indigenous in Bengal, and it seems doubtful whether so moist a climate will ever produce timber equal to that grown on the hills. Bengal is not, however, deficient in vegetation; and a Flora Bengalensis would be rich in trees and flowers of all shapes and sizes, from passion-flowers little larger than a wafer, up to the *Dillenia*, which may be said to look as a Spanish chestnut

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might if covered with a shower of magnificent white water-lilies.*

The banyan, which is, perhaps more than any other tree, characteristic of India, grows as freely in Bengal as elsewhere: its branches are usually the haunt of monkeys and the large bats called flying foxes, which feed upon its berries. A recollection of evening in Bengal brings these creatures to one's mind, flying in a single heavy file about a mile in length across the transient glow succeeding sunset.† The Peepal-tree is also of the fig tribe (*Ficus religiosa*), and is scarcely less noble in appearance. The leaf is heart-shaped, with a long taper point and a slender leaf-stalk, rustling in the wind. The roots of the peepal spread horizontally near the surface of the ground, and old peepal-trees often exhibit a great extent of bare roots, owing to the ground having been washed away; the trunks also lose their roundness with age, and become so full of ridges as to look like several trunks united: this tree is remarkable for the facility with which its seeds germinate, springing up in every crevice of brickwork, to which, if not speedily removed, their rapid growth causes great destruction. In India, in consequence, ruins and the peepal are as much associated in the mind as ruins and ivy are in England. And not only in brickwork does it spring unbidden, but its sprouts are often seen on other trees, and especially on

* To watch for the flowering of the trees, and observe the many freaks and endless varieties of vegetation, is one of the best pleasures of life in Calcutta, especially for those who have had the happiness of knowing the late Dr. Wallich, and have enjoyed the privilege of visiting the Botanic Gardens in his company.

† At a distance they might be casually mistaken for a flight of rooks; but their length of wing is much greater, six feet being sometimes the measure between the extended points.

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the summit of the palmyra, where its berries or seeds are frequently dropped by birds. The peepal then sends its roots down outside the palmyra stem, round which they gradually form a case, until at length nothing is seen of the palmyra except the head, which appears to be growing in the midst of a peepal tree. When this occurs the joint tree becomes a very sacred object, modern Hindus regarding it as a divine marriage. Trees in India also grow together by simple contact, and trees half peepal and half banyan, or half peepal and half mango, are by no means uncommon; and in some cases the union is even purposely effected,—a notion at present prevailing in the central parts of India, that the fruit of a new mango plantation must not be tasted until an imaginary marriage has been performed between the mangoes and some other tree; and money must be spent and feasting carried on to as great an extent as if the marriage were a real one.*

Let us now imagine one of our countrymen making his first voyage to these Eastern territories, his mind well informed with all that the hints and the story-telling of classic and Indian history afford. As he enters the Bay

* Sleeman's 'Rambles and Recollections,' vol. i. pp. 41–43. The Peepal (*Ficus religiosa*) and the India-rubber tree (*Ficus elastica*) resemble the Banyan (which is *Ficus Indica*) in having a power of throwing out roots from the stem and branches. In the banyan these roots usually proceed from the outer branches, reach the ground, and become supports, giving occasionally to a single tree the effect of a little forest; in the peepal they are oftener seen dangling from the main stem; but both these and the India-rubber are alike in their tendency to throw out roots from the main stem as well as from the branches, and in the tendency which these roots have to run down the surface of the trunk and cohere either with it or with each other, giving a sculptural appearance which is extremely picturesque. This is described by the late lamented botanist, Mr. Griffith (of the East India Company's medical service), in a very interesting report on the caoutchouc

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of Bengal he looks eagerly for the submerged city of Bali, and about thirty-five miles to the south of Madras a beautiful pagoda stands out upon a little peninsula of land. In passing the coast of Orissa he sees black specks, which he knows to be, first, the Temple of Juggunath, and secondly, the Black Pagoda; and he longs to see the more interesting and more ancient Temple of Bobaneswar, within fifteen miles of the town of Cuttack. The next land which meets the eye of the voyager is the island of Saugor, and then he knows that he has entered the broad mouth of the river Hoogly, and that the dark lines on the horizon are the heavy woods which fringe its banks. Immediately he feels transported into unreal life; scenes of a play, or dreams of Arabian Nights, or passages from Scripture, seem to be enacting in his presence. He sees Rebecca at the well, the sheep following the shepherd, two women grinding at one mill, etc. Presently signs of British wealth and energy appear: on his left hand the Botanic Garden, dear to all lovers of flowers as having been the residence of Roxburgh and Wallich, for a short time also of the lamented Griffith, and now of Dr. Thomson. Immediately

tree of Assam. "Very generally," he says, "this species, as well as some others, vegetates in other trees," the roots descend and form a network round the tree; "and at last a nearly solid and excessively firm cylinder is formed, which encloses, as it were in a case, the tree which originally protected the young seedling; in such a case the fig-tree has no trunk;" since what answers the purpose of a trunk "is an aggregation and coherence of roots, or growth in a descending direction. One may readily imagine such trees overtopping others, for if they vegetate on a tree sixty feet from its base, it is at once obvious that this distance is an actual gain in height over all the others. Such instances are perhaps the only ones in which epiphytes destroy the plants on which they grow." One of these trees measured seventy-four feet round the trunk, and was about one hundred feet in height.—*J. A. S. B.*, Feb. 1848.

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above these gardens stands the Bishop's College, of which the learned Dr. Mill was Principal; and now the opposite bank is adorned with the beautiful villas of Garden Reach; then passing Kidderpore, the plain called the Maidan and its shaded, well-watered roads, to which every imaginable description of vehicle—barouche, palki, buggy, mail-coach, kranchy—bring their owners to enjoy the evening breeze, or "eat the air," in native phrase. Nor less varied are the boats, the panchways, dinghies, budgerows, schooners, cutters, steamboats, through which a ship from England makes (or used to make) its way, until the impatient passengers at length escaped, and, if they arrived in sunshine, were carried in palanquins up the steps of Chandpaul Ghat, having already caught sight of Government House, the Town-hall, the Cathedral, and the Ochterlony monument.

A former Governor-General is said to have declared that he had learned more of India during the one day spent in sailing up the Hoogly, than in all his previous years of Eastern study; and no doubt there is in India an atmosphere of richness, producing a tranquillity which can neither be expressed nor imparted. Quietude is as characteristic of the Hindu as activity of our northern races. To smoke the semi-intoxicating *bang*, or datura, is to them the highest happiness,—a professional story-teller, with dreamy eye, often entrancing the attention of a reclining audience, all smoking or chewing betel. Merchants, possessing stores of wealth, sit all day upon their shop-counters smoking hubble-bubbles. Native noblemen go about clothed in two wide strips of muslin, or rather they go little about, but sleep and smoke, and enjoy incense and perfumes within unfurnished palaces and formal gardens, content

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without newspapers or current literature, and often ignorant of political changes, even when living at the very seat of government. After dwelling for a time in India, it is discovered that although great capacity lies inherent in the Hindu character, and is shown at times in individuals, Hindus have not usually ready sympathy with Europeans and European modes of thought; and that the learned and generous Rammohun Roy, and the sagacious and open-minded Dwarkanath Tagore, are no more average specimens of Hindus than Robert Burns or Robert Bloomfield are of British ploughmen. The mass of the people appear inert, without wants and without energy, and a stranger is tempted to believe that their ideas have been stereotyped from generation to generation for countless ages past; but he remembers that these same Hindus are the people whose heroism was admired by Alexander the Great, and whose philosophy and manufactures are celebrated by Greek historians. He remembers also what he has read of the classic Sanskrit language and literature; and as soon as the dream of delight attending his first arrival has subsided, he seeks eagerly to learn which of all the motley groups around are real Hindus of ancient classical descent. Not the Mohammedans,—that point is easily determined, as their first incursion into the country was no earlier than A.D. 1000, a date too recent to admit of mystification. The same remark applies to those of Portuguese descent, at present numerous in Calcutta, and also to the Chinese; but besides these, some thick-featured, black-skinned people may be seen working in sewers, or serving as boats' crews, who are aborigines from the hills and forests; and, with these exceptions, he is told that all the native population he be-

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holds may be considered generally as genuine Hindus. The Baboos, or native merchants, are Hindus; the Buneahs, or bankers, are Hindus; and the Zemindars and Ryots, who are respectively owners and cultivators of land, —the sepoys, or soldiers, and the Rajputs, and the up-country men who stand in pink or red turbans as durwans and chokeedars at the gates of gentlemen's houses,—these are all Hindus, and so also are Brahmans of every grade; those of highest rank who live in learned ease, those less wealthy or well-born who officiate in temples, and those still poorer who beg for a subsistence, are all descendants of the original Hindus,—the people who possess a language and a history, and whose ancestors at some remote and unknown period brought the religion of the Vedic Hymns from lands beyond the Indus. But to trace the thread of Hindu history, from the present period through the intermediate labyrinths, was found to be a task which Hindus themselves had not performed. Their genius ever increases the volume of the labyrinthine mazes, but gives no clue whereby to reach the solution of the mystery. Nor did our predecessors, the French, the Dutch, or the Portuguese, much concern themselves about antiquity; and consequently when in the middle of the last century the East India Company's factories became settled in Bengal, very little more was known of the country than had been related by the Greeks three hundred years before the Christian era; to the series of labours which then commenced we must now apply our best attention.

The first inquirers were little more than pioneers breaking up the ground for those who followed. Ruined cities, temples, and most astonishing excavations were discovered,

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the origin of which tradition vaguely hinted at as lost in periods too remote for history. The gods and goddesses of the existing idolatry were vainly compared with those of Greece and Egypt, and many theories were erected, to be as quickly overthrown; everywhere curiosity was excited, but nowhere could it meet with satisfaction. Chronicles and records were discovered, but they were all in Sanskrit, and Sanskrit was "the language of the gods," which it was sacrilege to communicate to foreigners and heretics. Added to the difficulty thus raised by superstition, was that of the very complex structure of the Sanskrit tongue; but difficulties only increased the ardour of the studious, and Adelung mentions that, in thirty years, seven hundred works were published upon this new subject.* But these labours did not resolve the difficulty, and, although the language was attained and the records explored, the search for history was baffled; in vain Sir William Jones and his fellow-labourers strove to reconcile dates and harmonize events, and it was at length discovered that, as a fancy artist deals with towns or churches, trees or hills, and places them near or far according to pictorial effect, so had the Hindu annalist treated events; and whilst picturesque remoteness was granted to one sovereign, the deeds of his posterity were grouped around another. The study of Sanskrit was not however abandoned, for the religious writings, although inaccurate in dates and names, gave indications of sublimity. The law-books bore internal evidence of antiquity, and offered most interesting pictures of manners and customs; the heroic poems shared this merit, and also proved themselves rich in poetry; the dramas and later effu-

* Hist. Sketch of Sanscrit Literature. (Talboys, Oxford.)

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sions glittered with fanciful imagery, and only works comparatively modern were found encumbered by impure idolatry or puerile extravagance.

It is not surprising that, in the first enthusiasm of these discoveries, the merits of Sanskrit literature should have been exaggerated. Many learned Europeans expected a regeneration in letters similar to that produced by the revival of Greek in the fifteenth century; others hoped for the happiest effects from its religious spirit; and others again fixed their admiration rather on the language than on the literature it contained. One scholar after another proved its dates fictitious, and its facts enveloped in fable; but it dawned upon them that the very construction of the language itself would afford a date or fixed point, from which the successive variations of its forms and alphabets might be contemplated.

This hope has not been disappointed, for by researches into the structure and affinities of language, the learned have not only been assisted in their labour of marshalling Sanskrit writings into chronological groups, but they have become convinced that the Sanskrit language is the parent of all other classic tongues. Somewhere in Central Asia they place a primeval nursery, or great cradle, in which infant nations lisped in infant Sanskrit. From age to age emigrants or colonies wandered forth from this depôt, and, as centuries rolled on, were fashioned into Greeks, Latins, Slaves, Celts, etc., each developing its own peculiar language from the original Sanskrit germ. At length Persians and Hindus alone were left to cultivate their common language, and bear the name of *Aryan*,—a name which the Persians long retained, as may be seen in the inscriptions at Nakshi

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Rustam. Lastly, the Hindus quitted the original *Aryavarta*, or home of Aryans, travelled to the East, and settled themselves in India.

Some years ago the possessors of the oldest *Aryan* language would have been allowed undisputed claim to the earliest civilization; but now Egypt claims a pre-Mosaic history, and Scythic Nineveh dates her prosperity as *previous to* 2231 B.C. India must therefore limit her pretensions to being the earliest heathen nation in the field of literature. Sanskrit hymns are extant in rude and rugged language, which the Pentateuch alone surpasses in antiquity; cut away from the mainland of Hindu literature, these collected hymns, called Vedas, loom out of the distance, like headland rocks which the sea has separated from the neighbouring coast. Much beauty or sublimity must not be expected in this unearthed, insular kind of literature, but it tells of customs and modes of worship nowhere else explained, and it is therefore indispensable to a right appreciation of the genius of antiquity.

Upon leaving the Vedas we must leap over several centuries, and then plunge into the Brahmanical literature so much admired by Sir William Jones. The ancient Brahmans are well known to have shown no small favour to class interests; but although selfish they were philosophic, full of deep thought, poetry, and a sublime belief in immortality. Beneath their jealous influence kings had little power, villages governed themselves, learning and the industrial arts flourished, and even religion possessed a freedom and energy unknown to India's later days. This subject will be treated in successive chapters, elucidating life in old Brahmanical India, by a reference to the literature which preceded the Macedonian invasion.

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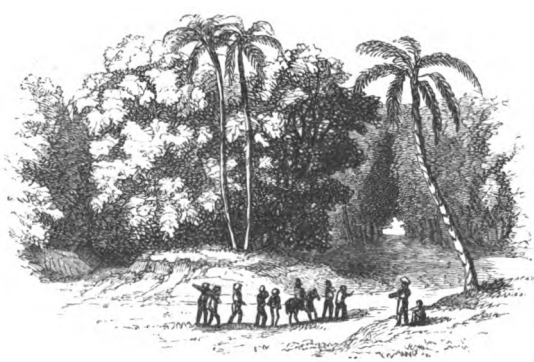
Book II. treats of Buddhism, a religion which bears an external perverted kind of resemblance to Christianity, giving a peculiar interest to the circumstances under which it was developed. Originating in India as a reform, it produced no general sensation until about three centuries after the death of its founder, when, during one long prosperous reign, it was adopted as the state religion. To Brahmans however we shall find it was utterly repulsive; through their influence it was ultimately banished from its native country, and to this day it is rejected by every Aryan nation.

Book III. returns to Brahmanism, giving a notice of the Poems, Dramas, and Puranas,—beautiful, absurd, fanciful, —which were produced subsequent to the era of Alexander the Great. This brings our review down to the time when the Mohammedans began their conquests in the country, at which period this Work concludes, after a short inquiry as to the success which attended Brahmanical regulations and Buddhist theories.



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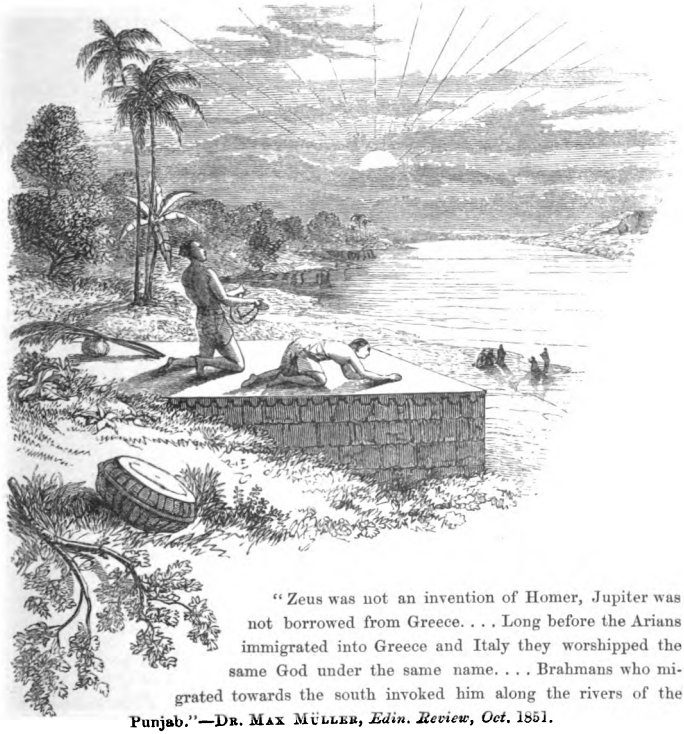
BOOK I.

INDIA PREVIOUS TO ALEXANDER THE GREAT.



"Zeus was not an invention of Homer, Jupiter was not borrowed from Greece. . . . Long before the Arians immigrated into Greece and Italy they worshipped the same God under the same name. . . . Brahmans who migrated towards the south invoked him along the rivers of the Punjab."—DR. MAX MÜLLER, *Edin. Review, Oct.* 1851.

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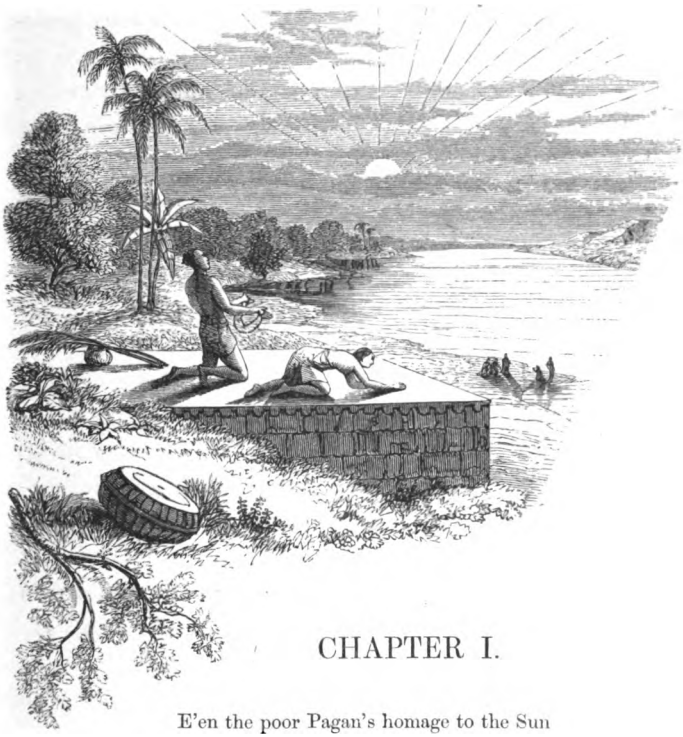

CHAPTER I.

E'en the poor Pagan's homage to the Sun
I would not harshly scorn, lest even there
I spurn'd some element of Christian prayer,
An aim, though erring, at a world ayont:
Acknowledgment of good, of man's futility,
A sense of need and weakness, and indeed
That very thing so many Christians want—Humility.

THOMAS HOOD.

WHEN first the British went to India, religious Hindus thought it sacrilege to allow unbelieving Christians even to look upon their sacred books, and in consequence the Vedas long enjoyed that mysterious reputation which ap-

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pertains to unseen authorities. Sir William Jones penetrated little beyond modern versions of particular passages; and even Mr. Colebrooke, who did much towards winning the confidence of the Pundits, was far from obtaining any complete knowledge of these works. Nevertheless up to a very recent period Mr. Colebrooke has been the first authority upon this subject, and his Essays are referred to and quoted by every writer on the Vedas, whether in India, Germany, France, or England. He has translated short fragments and made abstracts of larger portions, which are highly valued, as being accurate and free from unjust bias. He does not adopt Scripture language to convey the meaning of the Sanskrit words; nor does he, on the other hand, view these early religious impressions through the medium of European prejudice, an error of which the missionary author, Mr. Ward, cannot be acquitted. Gradually complete copies of these venerable books were obtained in India, and lodged in the public libraries of London, Oxford, France, and Germany, where, for a long series of years, they have in each country received the attention of distinguished scholars. The four Vedas were formerly supposed to be equally old and equally original; but now it is ascertained that whilst the hymns of which the Rig-Veda consists rank "as amongst the oldest extant records of the ancient world,"* the Sama Veda merely gives extracts from these hymns arranged for worship, the Yajur Veda contains hymns of later date, mixed with repetitions of the early specimens, and the Atharva Veda is a much later compilation, consisting of formularies required on certain rare occasions.

* Rig-Veda Sanhita, H. H. Wilson, Introd., p. xlviii.

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The language used in the Vedas differs very considerably, as already noticed, from the Sanskrit of general literature; and Mr. Stevenson, of Bombay, noticed in the Sama Veda two thousand words not admitted in the second edition of Wilson's Sanskrit dictionary.* The use of an eight-syllable metre is also adduced as a sign of antiquity;† and for these and other reasons the age attributed to the Rig-Veda is 1200 or 1400 B.C. What religious opinions prevailed at so remote a period was long a mystery; but the early enthusiasts for Sanskrit conceived that monotheism was India's first belief. Sir William Jones was told that the daily prayer called *Gayatri* was an address to the Sun, taken from the Vedas; and obtaining a copy and explanations from a Pundit (or learned Hindu), he gave the following rendering, heading it—

"*The Indian Philosophers' Belief.*‡

"Let us adore the supremacy of that divine Sun (opposed to the visible luminary), the Godhead who illuminates all, who recreates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright in our progress towards his holy seat."

This may happily give the views of rare philosophers, such as the lamented Rammohun Roy, but it is not the doctrine of the ancient Vedas; and of this all students will soon be competent to judge, for translations of the several Vedas are in progress in England, France, and Germany.

Mr. Colebrooke gives the Gayatri thus:—

"Let us meditate on the adorable light of the divine Ruler (Savitri). May it guide our intellects! Desirous of food, we solicit the

* Mr. Stevenson's Introduction to the Sama Veda.

† Elphinstone, Hist. India, p. 37; Hist. Sketch of Sanskrit, 7, 69.

‡ Works of Sir W. Jones, vol. vi. quarto.

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gift of the splendid Sun (Savitri), who should be studiously worshipped. Venerable men, guided by the understanding, salute the divine Sun (Savitri) with oblations and praise."*

Dr. Stevenson presents the following from the Sama Veda:—

"We are sustained by the superexcellent provisions furnished us by the resplendent Sun.. May he prosper our sacred rites!"†

And lastly, Professor Wilson translates it:—

"Let us meditate on the sacred light of that divine Sun, that it may illuminate our minds."‡

And this last rendering may be considered as correct, both in text and translation, as human sagacity can make it. It recognizes spiritual light, but it is vague and indistinct. Sir William Jones assumed too much, and, amid the wilful confusion of the dates given to him by his Pundits, could not always distinguish the limits of India's first or Vedic era; but now correct translations and comments have thrown open the subject, and such inaccuracy would no longer be excusable.

Professor Wilson observes that the Sun, Surya or Savitri, occupies a less conspicuous place in Hindu worship than might have been anticipated; only three Suktas in the First Book are addressed to him individually, and these "convey no very strikingly expressive acknowledgment of his supremacy."§ But although Sun-worship was not prominent, the Hindus loved light and even warmth, and the Sun, the "ray-diffuser," and Agni, as light, heat, and fire, call forth their best affections. The expressions of the Hindu poets in their hymns to these deities show careful

* Colebrooke's Essays, vol. i. p. 30.
† Introduction to the Sama Veda.
‡ Oxford Lectures, p. 15.
§ Rig-Veda, Introd. p. xxxii.

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and loving observation of Nature; "white as the sun" gives a truth which can scarcely be appreciated by those who have not experienced the striking absence of colour in the intense light of a summer day in India. The solar ray is called "deep-quivering, life-bestowing;" and the Sun is "bright-haired" and "golden-handed," that is, the giver of abundance. Agni is the "golden-haired," and both alike are regarded as emblems of purity. The Sun, Savitri, is said to come "from a distance, removing all sins;"* or the divine Sun is entreated to remove the "sickness of the heart" and "the yellowness of the body." The following address, translated by Mr. Griffith of Oxford, may be taken as a fair specimen of the higher spiritual perceptions proper to this era.

HYMN TO THE SUN.

I.

"Risen in majestic blaze,
Lo! the Universe's eye,
Vast and wondrous, host of rays,
Shineth brightly in the sky.
Soul of all that moveth not,
Soul of all that moves below;
Lighteth he earth's gloomiest spot,
And the heavens are all aglow!

II.

"See! he followeth the dawn,
Brilliant in her path above:
As a youth, by beauty drawn,
Seeks the maiden of his love!
Holy men and pious Sages
Worship now the glorious Sun;
For by rites, ordain'd for ages,
Shall a good reward be won.

* Hymn xxxv., p. 98.

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III.

"Look! his horses, mounted high,
Good of limb, and swift and strong,
In the forehead of the sky,
Run their course the heavens along!
Praises to his steeds be given,
Racing o'er the road of heaven!

IV.

"Such the majesty and power,
Such the glory of the Sun:
When he sets at evening hour,
The worker leaves his task undone.
His steeds are loosed, and over all
Spreadeth Night her gloomy pall.

V.

"When he rides in noontide glow,
Blazing in the nation's sight,
The skies his boundless glory show,
And his majesty of light;
And when he sets, his absent might
Is felt in thickening shades of night.

VI.

"Hear us, O ye Gods, this day!
Hear us graciously, we pray!
As the Sun his state begins,
Free us from all heinous sins.
Mitra, Varun, Aditi!
Hear, O hear us graciously!
Powers of ocean, earth, and air,
Listen, listen to our prayer!"

The charm of a fresh morning after a night in India is expressed by a personification of Sunrise, or Dawn, as Ushas. "Born in the eastern quarter of the firmament, she displays a banner of rays of light;" "The noble and

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all-pervading Ushas has risen from darkness, bringing health to human habitations;" "The beloved Ushas scatters darkness from the sky;" "The many-tinted Dawn opens our doors, makes our riches manifest;" "The expansive Ushas has given back all regions."

"She hath dwelt in heaven of old,
May we now her light behold!
Which, dawning brightly from afar,
Stirreth up the harness'd car,
Like as merchant-folk for gain
Send their ships across the main.

"Morning comes, the nurse of all,
Like a matron, at whose call
All that dwell the house within
Their appointed task begin."*

More than once it is observed that the dawning of Ushas wakens the birds; and, lastly, it "causes the sacred fire to be kindled, and men to prepare for sacrifice." And this brings us to the reverence paid to fire in these hymns. The first act of a pious Hindu, when awakened in the morning, was to invoke "the smoke-bannered Agni (fire);" "The protector of the worship of the worshipper at the break of day." The earliest word for God, we must remember, expressed *light above,* and in accordance with this feeling we find "resplendent Agni" regarded as a type or form of deity. The sacrificial fire was kindled and cherished as heavenly light come down to dwell with man. "The Gods left Agni," says one of their hymns, "as a dear friend amongst the human races, present in the chamber of sacri-

* Specimens of Old Indian Poetry, by R. T. Griffith, vol. i., Hymn xlviii. of Rig-Veda.

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fice."* Agni is like a "benevolent man:"† he gives "happiness in a dwelling like a son (newly born); he abides on earth like a prince with his faithful friends;" and "men sit in his presence like sons in the dwelling of a parent."‡ Agni is also more refined than many of the deities of this era. In purity he resembles an irreproachable and beloved wife, and with exquisite grace he is described as ornamenting the chamber of sacrifice as a woman adorns a dwelling.

But Agni, although much beloved, was nevertheless but a vague indefinite idea. Sometimes simply as *fire* he tosses about his flames like rushing rivers, and roaring like the resounding billows of the ocean; often he is a messenger between earth and heaven, sent as a prince who has become a friend sends an ambassador to his more powerful conqueror. At one time he sustains the earth, and studs the sky with constellations; at another he is born from dry wood, or created by rubbing one piece of wood upon another:—

"Thou to whom the wood gives birth,
Thou that callest Gods to earth,
Call them that we may adore them,
Sacred grass is ready for them.

"Messenger of Gods art thou;
Call them, Agni, call them now!
Fain our offerings would they taste;
Agni, bid them come in haste.

* Rig-Veda, vol. ii. pp. 11, 7; *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 123, 78, 297.
† Wilson's Rig-Veda, vol. ii. p. 280.
‡ *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 184, 194, 195, 179.

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"Brilliant Agni! lo, to thee
Pour we offerings of ghee;
Oh, for this consume our foes
Who on demons' aid repose!

"Praise him in the sacrifice,
Agni, ever young and wise!
Glorious in his light is he,
Healer of all malady.

"Purifying, brilliant Fire!
Hear, great Agni, our desire!
Be thy care the Gods to bring
Hither to our offering."*

Agni was, as we have seen, a very variable character, sometimes acting the part of *Hotri*, as he calls the Gods to sacrifice; sometimes accepting offerings on his own behalf, but also indicating powers of purity, removing sin and granting health, and strengthening our affection for the Gods of Light.

Connected with Sun-worship are two hymns in honour of the Horse Sacrifice, called *Aswamedha*. The horse is a mystical horse, "sprung from the Gods," "fabricated from the sun." The actual sacrifice was probably a custom belonging to the Hindus' earlier home in Northern Asia, where the Scythians and Massagetæ are known to have offered horses to the sun; and later, when treated as an emblematic ceremony, the mythical horse typified the Sun, and the Sun typified the universal soul. The hymns describe the horse as "bathed and decorated with rich trappings, the variously-coloured goat going before him." Three times he is led round the sacrificial fire; he is bound

* Specimens of Old Indian Poetry, by R. T. Griffith.

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to a post and immolated by an axe, and the flesh is roasted on a spit, boiled, made into balls and eaten, and finally—

"The horse proceeds to that assembly which is most excellent:
To the presence of his father and his mother (heaven and earth).
Go (horse,) today rejoicing to the Gods, that (the sacrifice) may
yield blessings to the donor."*

This ceremony was afterwards performed symbolically, and is alluded to in Upanishads and Brahmanas (which are treatises attached to the Vedas), as a ceremony of peculiar solemnity and deep significance, and one which is supposed to procure universal dominion. In the very much later writings called Puranas the rite is altogether travestied: a mortal rajah there performs the sacrifice in order to dethrone the God Indra; and it is upon this version of the story, that Southey constructed his 'Curse of Kehama,'—correctly enough, Professor Wilson observes, according to the authorities which he followed, "but the main object of the ceremony, the deposal of Indra from the throne of *Swarga* and the elevation of the Sacrificer after a hundred celebrations to that rank, are fictions of a later date, uncountenanced by the Veda."†

The worship of Light, with which this ceremony was first connected, began before the Hindus entered India; whereas Indra was a local deity of strictly Indian origin. Indra is a "personification of the phenomena of the firmament, particularly in the capacity of sending down rain." He personifies the sky or the atmosphere, and may be called the God of Clouds and Storms. He is invoked to strike the demon Vritra, who withholds the periodical rains, upon which the fertility of the country depends.

* Rig-Veda, vol. ii. p. 112. † *Ibid.*, vol. ii., Introd. p. xii.

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In the month of May the heat in India becomes intense: vegetation is dried up, the crops cannot be sown, the cattle droop, and milk and butter become scarce. Famine or plenty depends upon the expected rains, and the daily gathering of the sky is watched with intense anxiety; but although the array of clouds is constantly enlarging, there is no rain until a rattling thunderstorm charges the ranks and the broken clouds let loose the impetuous showers "This," says the Veda, "is Indra, who comes 'loud shouting' in his car, and hurls his thunderbolt at the demon (or demon-shaped cloud, called) Vritra."

"He strikes off the head of the earth-shaking Vritra with his rain-causing, hundred-spiked Vagra (thunderbolt). His might has been gloriously displayed, and Indra rolls up and spreads out both heaven and earth as men do a skin carpet."*

To do full justice to Indra's battle with Vritra a storm should be witnessed from a lofty hill in Western India, the thick black clouds coursing over the distant plains, the lightning darting into them from the electric vapour above, and the torrents of rain discharged in consequence. These beneficent storms are always preceded by sudden wind, announced by rushing sounds and whirlwinds of dust, which are Indra's attendant allies the Maruts, "at whose roaring every dweller upon earth shakes."

Indra recovered the cattle of the "Sacrificers" when the robber Vala had hidden them in a cave; and other rough deeds he performed for his worshippers, who praise him for being "strong as a twice-twisted rope:" they represent him as young and handsome, with a beautiful nose or chin,

* Stevenson, Sama-Veda, p. 251 *and note.*

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wearing two golden earrings, ever joyous, and delighting in exhilarating draughts of the Soma-juice.

"Rejoice, Indra! open thy jaws, set wide thy throat, be pleased with our oblations!

"Drinker of the Soma-juice, wielder of the thunderbolt! bestow upon us abundance of cows with projecting jaws!

"Thy swift horses, Indra, have uttered a loud sound announcing rain; the level earth anxiously expects its fall.

"The mighty Indra has shattered the guileful Vritra reposing in the cloud: heaven and earth shook, alarmed at the thundering bolt of the showerer. Drinking the Soma-juice, he (Indra) baffled the devices of the guileful Danava.

"Drink, hero, Indra, drink the Soma!

"Indra, hero, exulting in the solemn rites, quaff the Soma-juice, and, repeatedly shaking it from thy beard, repair to the drinking of the effused libation."

Some of the Vedic hymns would lead one to suppose that to *kindle* fire on the altar was the duty to which man first awoke; but other passages speak of fire as "constantly kindled" in the house of a pious worshipper, and it is therefore probable that he only gave "fresh vital air" to the flames at sunrise, and then made his offering of ghee or butter to whichever God he desired to invoke; but when the soma-juice was presented, a public ceremonial called a Soma-yága appears to have been held. On these occasions an additional fire was kindled, by means of a species of churn made of acacia, called *arani* wood: one piece of the wood was drilled into the other, and the upright piece pulled by a loose string, after the fashion by which Hindus make butter. In one address to Indra he is entreated to come "when they bind the churning-staff (with a cord), like reins to restrain (a horse)." A large shed was constructed, called the *Yajna-sálá*. Seven priests attended,

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each having a distinct title and office; the Rishi, or Raja, at whose expense the festival was given, acting as *Hotri*, or invoker. At a daily morning sacrifice only two persons are mentioned as officiating,—the Purohita, who superintended, and the Hotri, who invoked the Gods. The Sama-Veda gives hymns from the Rig-Veda, arranged in a ritual, to be used on these occasions, and the priests are exhorted to sing the birth of the Gods and the praise of the Gods in alternate lays, with a sound as regular as that of the dripping of the soma-juice. Very little allusion is made to animal sacrifices, but they were probably not unknown, for the priests are to make as much noise as "dogs driven away hungry from a sacrifice." The soma-juice was at any rate the more important portion of the offering; the plants were gathered on the hills by moonlight, and brought home in carts drawn by rams. "Indra," it is said, "found this treasure from heaven, hidden like the nestlings of a bird in a rock, amidst a pile of vast rocks, enclosed by bushes;" the stalks are bruised with stones, and placed with the juice in a strainer of goats'-hair, and are further squeezed by the priest's ten fingers, ornamented by rings of flattened gold. Lastly, the juice, mixed with barley and clarified butter, ferments, and is then drawn off in a scoop for the Gods, and a ladle for the priests, and then they say to Indra, "Thy inebriety is most intense, nevertheless thy acts are most beneficent."

Sometimes Indra is addressed in a more spiritual strain. "One man,"* says Agastya, "propitiates him with sacrifice, another worships with mind averted: to the first he is like a lake to a thirsty traveller; to the other, like an ever-

* Rig-Veda, vol. ii. p. 165.

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lengthening road." Indra does not vary so much in character as Agni, but he also is sometimes recognized as Creator of the universe, as "he who fixed firm the moving earth, who tranquillized the incensed mountains, who spread the spacious firmament,"* or "fixed the heaven in unsupported (space)," and "measured the eastern (quarters) with measures like a chamber;"† but in this grand hymn the individuality of Indra is retained by the closing words of each verse: "In the exhilaration of the Soma, Indra has done these deeds."

Indra is occasionally called upon to share his "soma wine" and "sacrificial food" with his allies the Maruts (winds); but to this he objects, asking, "Who attracts them, wandering like kites in the mid-air?" "Sacred rites," Indra continues, "are mine; praises give me pleasure, libations are for me; I am fierce and strong and mighty, and have bowed down all mine enemies with death-dealing shafts;" —the Maruts assert that it was with their aid, and thus an innovation or dissent from the older worship is implied.‡

But whether presented to Indra alone, or to Indra and the Maruts conjointly, soma wine was the coveted offering, and this is an important fact in determining the locality of the Hindus in the time of the Rig-Veda. The Soma is a round, smooth, twining plant, not to be found in rich soils, as we learn from Dr. Royle, but is peculiar to the mountains in the west of India, the desert to the north of Delhi, and the mountains of the Bolan Pass.§ The Rig-

* Rig-Veda, vol. ii. p. 236. The scholiast explains that he "quieted the mountains, going hither and thither as long as they had wings: Indra cut them off."

† Rig-Veda, vol. ii. p. 245.

‡ *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 146.

§ Lecture on the Results of the Great Exhibition, p. 456, *note*.

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Veda could not therefore have been composed upon the Ganges; its hymns tell moreover of dense forests through which a path is made by the "fierce-blazing Agni," who, rushing rapidly, "leaves a blackened track."

"Excited by the wind, and roaring loudly, Agni penetrates amongst the timber."

"He traverses the woods, and shears the hairs of the earth."

"The flame-weaponed and breeze-excited Agni, assailing the unexhaled moisture (of the trees), rushes triumphant like a bull; all are afraid of him as he flies along."*

Here we see newly-arrived settlers setting fire to the woods in North American fashion; and entering from the north-west, we imagine them to have made their way down the left bank of the Indus, and to have possessed themselves of lands stretching eastward to the Aravalli Hills, and southward to the sea: such a location appears to fulfil the conditions required by the hymns, where we have Prince Bhávya† "dwelling upon the banks of the Sindhu;" and within sight, undoubtedly, were mountains and caves not far distant, in which Vala hid the cows of the worshippers. Indra, in battle, wearing armour, is said to "shine like the peak of a mountain seen afar;" his impetuosity is compared to the "rush of waters down a precipice," and his golden thunderbolt, hurled against the foe, "slept not on the mountain;" the "graceful spotted deer" and "thirsty deer" also indicate the neighbourhood of hills, whilst the prominent place which these singers give to horses is accounted for by their possession of the level plains of Sindh and Kattiwar.‡ The Gods are compared to horses: "Indra

* Rig-Veda, vol. i. p. 156. † *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 17; vol. i. p. 320.

‡ The horse of the country along the Ganges is a very inferior animal, and never could have furnished the illustrations of the Veda.—H. H. W.

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becomes furious as a horse's tail," or Agni goes to receive offerings, "delighted as a horse goes to battle;" and distinction is made between "rider-bearing steeds" and "quick-moving, prancing steeds, rapid as hawks," which fly through the air yoked to cars. Cars and chariots are continually mentioned, but we do not meet with official charioteers. Indra himself drives his "long-maned steeds," and Agni harnesses "his glossy-backed coursers;" whereas in later Sanskrit literature we find the king always accompanied by a driver, according to the Assyrian custom depicted on the marbles from Nineveh. One passage is thought to indicate that their horses had no saddles, and another that they had the Tatar practice of milking the mares. "A hundred vigorous steeds" is not an unusual present from a generous prince to a holy man, or Rishi; one of whom says "he accepted gold, horses, and bulls," and then proceeds, "Ten chariots drawn by bay steeds, and carrying my wives, stood near me;" "Forty bay horses harnessed to the chariots, lead the procession in front of a thousand followers;" and on this occasion the great man's kinsmen "rub down the high-spirited steeds, decorated with golden trappings."*

We observe a perpetual dread of enemies of a race unlike their own, for they not only call them "spider-like sons of Danu," and Dasyas (robbers), but a "*black*-sprung host" and "*black* Asuras:" these enemies had cities and kings, and worshipped a god, *Nirritti*, who is dreaded even by the "*white*-complexioned friends of Indra."

. "Let not the most powerful and indestructible Nirritti destroy us: let her perish with our (evil) desires."

* Rig-Veda, vol. ii. p. 18; vol. i. pp. 210, 211, 214.

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"Keep far from us Nirritti with unfriendly looks, and liberate us from whatever sin we may have committed."*

The Hindus call themselves *Aryas*, and although less is said of cities of the Aryas than of cities of the Dasyas, they were not a nomadic people, for they "measure the land with a rod," "plough the earth for barley," and "bring home the produce of their *fields* in *carts*."† We also find, through their poetical similes, that they practised many of the arts of civilized society. A holy man at the bottom of a well cries out, "Cares consume me, as a rat gnaws a weaver's threads." In other passages, "Day and night, like two famous female weavers, interweave the extended thread;"‡ or, "Night envelopes the extended (world) like (a woman) weaving a garment." Earrings and finger-rings, and wheels and yokes of chariots, are made of gold; and gold is the favourite simile for the rising sun, and for the hair of Agni; nor were they less acquainted with the use of iron, for a singer praises Indra as eagerly "as a carpenter bends the pliant metal round the wheel;" and when Vispalá, wife of Khela, had her foot cut off "like the wing of a bird in an engagement by night," the Aswins "gave her an iron leg that she might walk, the hidden treasure of the enemy being the object of the conflict."§

Nothing is said of money, but they seem to have used cowrie-shells as dice, a frightened man being compared to a gamester, who fears his adversary holding the four cowries, until they are thrown. Their riches they "hid in a chest, a hill, or a well." This is still the custom in Western India, and when the English took possession of Poonah, ten lacs of rupees belonging to the Peshwa were found built into

* Rig-Veda, vol. i. pp. 62, 107.
† *Ibid.*, vol. i. pp. 56, 284.
‡ *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 218.
§ *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 311.

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the side of a well. They transacted trade, and entreated Indra not to "take advantage" of his worshippers, "like a dealer." Merchants are also mentioned, "covetous of gain," whose ships "crowd the ocean;" but no foreign products appear to have been in use. Women are but casually mentioned, but enough is said to show that their condition was free and natural: the wife of a chief accompanies him to a midnight foray; the wife of a hunter "cuts up and divides the birds;" the first rays of morning come like a matron, awaking the household to their duties. From other passages we learn that women appeared in public, as where lightning is compared to a "splendidly attired wife of a man of rank," and the "bushes" are said to "wave to and fro like a woman in a chariot." A virtuous maiden who grows old in her father's house claims from him her support. "Thieves are frequently mentioned, debts and debtors are adverted to, and reverses of fortune." Another sign of social progress we gain from their knowledge of herbs and modes of medical treatment; "ambrosia," says a son of Kanwa, "is in the waters;" "all medicaments are in the waters;" thus anticipating some three thousand years ago the hydropathic doctrine of the nineteenth century. The sick man however expects the god Agni to co-operate with the waters: he exclaims, "Take away whatever sin has been found in me;" "May Agni abiding in the waters fill me with vigour!"* The virtue of herbs was also acknowledged; and praying to Rudra, called the chief physician amongst physicians, the worshipper says:—

"Nourished by the sanatory vegetables bestowed by thee, may I live a hundred winters!"†

* Rig-Veda, vol. i. p. 58. † *Ibid.*, vol. ii. p. 290.

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Rudra is an uncertain sort of deity, sometimes identified apparently with Indra; but in general, medicine is practised by two grotesque personages, called the Aswins; they are brothers, sons of the Sun; they travel in a three-cornered, three-wheeled car, drawn by asses, and with their long arms concern themselves in every odd legend of which the Veda makes mention: half-comic and half-serious, to a holy man who was beheaded for revealing to them forbidden science, they gave a horse's head, and stuck it on his shoulders in place of his own; the lame they enabled to walk, and the blind to see; an "aged man they restored to youth, as a wheelwright repairs a worn-out car;" one man they brought up from a well of water in which he lay like a jar of buried gold; "another, who was scorched by fire, they relieved with snow; an emaciated cow they made to give milk, and a field of barley they caused to be sown." For Vispalá they made an iron foot; to King Pedu they gave a white horse ensuring victory, and from the hoof of another steed they produced a hundred jars of wine. For their friend Divodasi they yoked the bull and the tortoise, and carried food and treasure to his dwelling in a car.* Not less strange was their manner of assisting Bhujyu, who "sailed in a hundred-oared ship:" he went to sea, and was nearly drowned; "when there was nothing to give support, nothing to rest upon, nothing to cling to," then went the Aswins, and brought him back "in vessels of their own, drawn by six horses along the dry bed of the ocean."† Our conclusion is, that these youthful professors of the healing art were the direct progenitors of the jugglers, magicians, barbers, and quacks, who in all ages have been celebrated

* Rig-Veda, vol. i., Hymns cxii. cxix. † *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 307.

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for combining drollery and sleight of hand, with skill in surgery and knowledge of medicaments.

In poetry the Hindus undoubtedly excelled, but the misfortune is, that those who cannot read Sanskrit are by no means in a position to do them justice. The third book of the Rig-Veda is said to be incomparably the finest, and this Professor Wilson has not yet translated, besides which, this primitive poetry is said to have a peculiar facility of escaping under the process of translation: perhaps we need two versions, one given with critical accuracy, and another in the imaginative spirit of the original. To sing praises was early an official occupation, and to "recite like a bard" used as a simile. Sacred hymns however are composed by Rishis (holy men), chiefs, or patriarchs, whose families are noted in Sanskrit literature even down to the Puranas, two thousand years later, as Angiras and the Angirases, Kanwa and the Kanwas, Viswamitra, Vasishta, and others. These men were not Brahmans, nor even priests, for during the Rig-Veda period division of caste had not commenced. We find neither Kshatriyas, nor Vaisyas, nor Sudras; and although Brahmans are mentioned, they are merely one amongst seven orders of priests, who minister under a king or patriarch at a solemn sacrifice. Society is always said to consist of *five* classes of men, an expression which Brahmanical scholiasts explain to mean the Aborigines, in addition to the four Castes; but this is a gratuitous supposition, for the whole tone of the Rig-Veda implies a free condition of society, quite different from that which afterwards prevailed under Brahmanical regulation. We there find new settlers, surrounded by enemies of different race, remembering the deities and customs of their

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fatherland, though adopting modes of worship suited to their new locality. Languishing in the arid sands of Sindh, they rejoiced to discover the acid soma-plant upon the neighbouring hills; panting for rain, they entreated Indra to quaff the exhilarating beverage, and to rend the clouds asunder, and let loose the reviving floods. The blessings prayed for are chiefly, as expressed by Professor Wilson, "of a temporal and personal description,—wealth, food, life, posterity, cattle, cows, horses, protection against enemies" —selfish and often puerile petitions; but self-forgetting aspirations also find utterance, and a few indications there are "of a hope of immortality, hatred of untruth, and abhorrence of sin;"* and many an old Hindu, we may hope, has stood by his fire-altar at daybreak, offering up fervent adoration to the "God written in the heart," of which the altar flames were to him the beloved household representation.

* Rig-Veda, vol. i., Introd. p. xxv.

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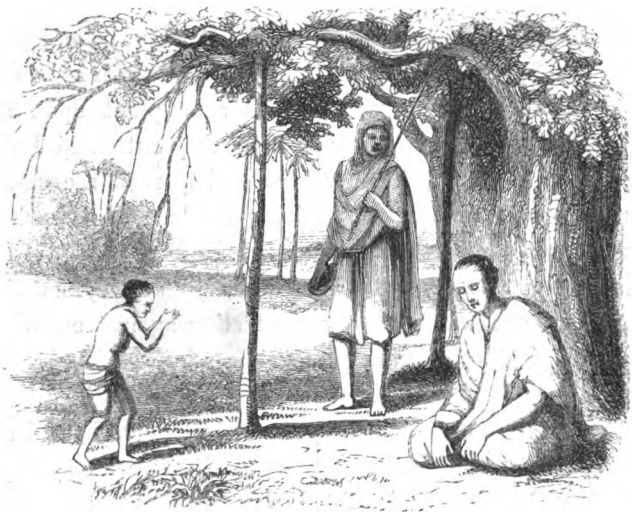

CHAPTER II.

"Let wild creeds come and go . . .
On nought but One, in Godhead infinite
And infinite in might,
Can deathless being lay its fever'd brow."—WILLIAMS.

SKETCHES of a nation's infancy bear some resemblance to a modern album or note-book, where many pages are blank, whilst others are crowded with graphic detail; where a few highly-finished drawings are found amongst numerous slight outlines, and where fragments of eloquent poetry are interspersed with dry, prosaic autographs. Or we may vary the image, and compare the earliest attainable views of Hindu life to a series of *tableaux vivans*, the first of which showed us the Patriarchs on the Indus writing hymns, invoking the Gods, and making war on their predatory neighbours;

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whilst *five* classes of men filled up the frame. This five-fold division is not explained in the Veda, and commentators are not agreed upon the subject; but it was evidently headed by the patriarch kings or chieftains, who united in themselves the office of high-priest and sovereign; the second class was probably formed of warriors riding and driving horses; the third was in this case a class of priests; the fourth comprised those following agriculture, trade, and mechanics; and the fifth is supposed to have been the aboriginal race, who stole cattle, but who possessed fields, cities, and gold, tempting the intruders to aggression. We have no means of adding to what we may thus learn from the ancient hymns, for the Hindus have no other writings of the same era, and neither Persia nor China afford chronicles referring to contiguous countries of such remote antiquity; and consequently when the Rig-Veda lets the curtain fall, a pause ensues of about six centuries.

At length the same people, with their Vedas and their Sanskrit, come again upon the stage; but the scenery has changed, and we now behold them occupying the broad lands of the Ganges, and possessing important towns in Oude and Tirhut. But we cannot at present advert to their political acquisitions, for our attention is at once riveted by a group of venerable persons upon whom the chief light of the picture is made to fall. They are sitting upon sacred *kusa* grass; their hair is shaved, their looks composed, and they are clothed in religious raiment peculiar to themselves: kings humbly take off their tiaras as they bow to the feet of the holy men; the merchant class make obeisance at a respectful distance; and the fourth and lowest class sweep the roads, uphold umbrellas, and

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wave the fans and fly-flappers. In this second picture we note great changes to have taken place, and especially the sharp separation which has been effected between civil and religious offices. The King, no longer permitted to invoke the Gods, has resigned the first place of honour to the Brahmans, who are a new and sacred class, seeking to monopolize learning, power, and religion. The process by which this great change was effected remains hidden behind the scenes, and we can only conjecture that many struggles and failures occurred before Brahmans succeeded in establishing their claims to divine origin and the sole right of performing religious functions, and of exercising spiritual dominion. But at the same time, we believe that the very word Brahman originated in philosophical speculation. In a passage of great eloquence, Dr. Müller describes man in the hymns of the Rig-Veda striving to solve the riddle of this world. He stares at the tent of heaven and asks who supports it; he gives names to all the powers of nature; he invokes them; but still he feels that within his own breast there is a Power that wants a name, "a Power nearer to him than all the Gods of Nature; a Power that is never mute when he prays, never absent when he fears and trembles: it seems to inspire his prayers, and yet to listen to them; it seems to live in him, and yet to support him and all around him. The only name he can find for this mysterious power is *Brahme*, for *Brahme* means originally force, will, wish, and the propulsive power of creation." Brahmans we imagine to have been men distinguished by their knowledge of *Brahme*, who gradually became the most powerful section of the Hindu people. Colonel Sykes has shown that the word Brahman

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is not a mere designation of office, but signifies a race, family, or tribe, bearing peculiar characteristics; a family, or clan, we infer, who gained permanent ascendency by the force of their intellectual endowments. Although this ascendency was not accomplished in the period of the Rig-Veda, the intellectual meditation which led to it was then commenced; and "there are hymns, though few in number, in the Veda," says Dr. Müller, "so full of thought and speculation, that at this early period no poet in any other nation could have conceived them." It should however be stated that these hymns are confined to the 10th Mandala, the whole tenour of which shows that it was very long posterior to the other nine and to the complete organization of Caste. The following is from Colebrooke's translation of the 129th hymn of the tenth book:—

"Then there was no entity, nor nonentity,
No world nor sky, nor aught above it:
Nothing anywhere . . .
Nor water deep and dangerous.
Death was not,
Nor then was Immortality,
Nor distinction of the day or night;
But THAT breathed without affliation . . .
Darkness there was;
This universe was enveloped in darkness,
And was undistinguishable water. . . .
Who knows and shall declare whence and why
This creation (ever) took place?
The Gods are subsequent to the production of this world:
Who then can know from whence
This varied world uprose? . . .
He who in the highest heaven is ruler, does know,
But not another can possess that knowledge."*

* Colebrooke, Essays, vol. i. p. 33.

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At this period of Brahmanical literature, the word That (*Tad*) is often used to indicate the Eternal Source of Being, as in the following hymn, or *Mantra*, from the Yajur-Veda :—

"Fire is That: the Sun is That:
The air, the moon, so also that pure Brahme,
Waters and the Lord of creatures (Prajapati).
* * * * *
He, prior to whom nothing was born,
And who became all beings . . .
Produced the sun, moon, and fire.
To what God should we offer oblations,
But to Him who made the fluid sky and solid earth,
Who fixed the solar orb . . . and framed the drops of rain?
To what God should we offer sacrifice
But to Him whom heaven and earth
Contemplate mentally? . . .
The wise man views that mysterious (Being)
In whom the universe perpetually exists,
Resting upon that sole support.
In Him is this world absorbed;
From Him it issues;
In creatures is He twined and wove, in various forms.
Let the wise man, conversant with holy writ,
Promptly celebrate that immortal Being
Who is the mysteriously existing, various abode." *

The hymn is continued in the same mystical strain, continually losing all idea of a Creator as separable from the world created, but including both ideas under the expressions Tad and Brahme.

The struggling forth of the universe from darkness and from water was a favourite idea of the Brahmans, who delighted in the sublimity of this primeval chaos, and knew that there was a "beginning," when "darkness was upon

* Colebrooke, vol. i. p. 57.

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the face of the deep, and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters;" but it was the flash of an intuition, striking momentary light across dark and puerile speculation.

In the hymn which commences, "Waters alone there were," the Lord of creation moves in the waters, "assuming the form of a boar."* Sometimes the Supreme Spirit produces an egg, and from the egg the universe is evolved.† Another prevalent notion is, that the universal soul became manifest as a horse named Viraj, who is thus described:

"Morning is his head,
The sun his eye,
Air his breath, the moon his ear,
The world his intellect, the earth his feet;
The celebrated Veda is his speech."‡

And through the instrumentality of this horse Viraj, all human forms and animal beings were produced. But these are mere hints at Brahmanical accounts of the creation, for such passages as are translated contain many tedious repetitions, and a great many passages are left untranslated, because the translators feel the details to be too coarse and unpleasant to present to English readers. The approaches of these people towards God are intensely interesting, marking how much and how little man's unassisted reason can divine. They launch out conjectures upon the sublimest and abstrusest subjects, and sometimes, like rockets, their thoughts shoot up into infinity, and break into a thousand coruscations of coloured light; but when we pursue the thought after its transient brilliancy has passed, we find it

* Colebrooke, vol. i. p. 75. † Cole, MS. ch. i.
‡ Colebrooke, vol. i. p. 62, and Ram. Roy, p. 32.

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like the expiring rocket, a feeble spark tied to a dead stick, or we find the stick alone, and that dragged through the dirt.

Viraj figures in many of their histories of creation as a link connecting the darkness which preceded, with the visible world, at length produced; and they endeavour to express a vague feeling that *sacrifice* has been the immediate cause of life to men and animals. Viraj, or Prajapati (Lord of creatures), gave himself to be sacrificed by the Demigods, and the universe was created from his substance: thus, in one of the hymns translated by Mr. Colebrooke from the tenth book of the Rig-Veda, we read,—

"That victim who was wove with threads on every side
And stretched by the labours of one hundred and one gods,
The fathers, who wove and framed
And placed the warp and woof,
Do worship."*

And the hymn proceeds to state, that by that universal sacrifice was produced sages and men, the sun and moon, and the holy verse called Gayatri; and it concludes with saying that the seven inspired sages wisely practise the performance of sacrifice, in imitation of these primeval saints. In the earlier hymns, the usual offerings were butter, rice, and soma-juice, but animals were also offered upon certain rare occasions. It is probable that different tribes had different customs, and that whilst some were gentle and contemplative, and made vegetable offerings, others sacrificed horses and cattle.

Allusion is even made to human sacrifice, and the hymns by Sunahsepas are said to have been uttered whilst he

* Colebrooke, vol. i. p. 34.

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was bound as a victim to the stake. No explanation is given in the Veda itself, but from an appended Brahmana we gather the following particulars.

A king, named Harischandra, had one hundred wives, but no son, and this was to him an intolerable affliction, because a sage named Narada assured him, that if he had no son he would have no existence after death, but that "a father who beholds the face of a living son discharges his debt (to his forefathers), and obtains immortality." The king therefore, acting under the advice of the sage, prayed to Varuna, and said, "Let a son be born unto me, and with him I will sacrifice to you." A son accordingly was born, and named Rohita, and Varuna claimed him as a sacrifice; but the father said he was yet too young, and Varuna consented to delay; but each year Varuna claimed the child, and the father still deferred, until his son, hearing of the fate intended for him, escaped to the woods, and the king, his father, was struck with leprosy in consequence. At length Rohita heard of the affliction which had befallen his father in consequence of his not fulfilling his vow of offering him in sacrifice, and instead of giving himself up as a victim, went to a distressed Brahman, named Ajigartta, and promised him a hundred cows if he would give one of his sons to be sacrificed in his place. Ajigartta agreed that he should have his second son, named Sunahsepas. Rohita then went to his father, saying, "Rejoice, father, for with this youth I shall redeem myself." The day for the sacrifice was appointed, and the ceremony commenced, but there was no one competent to the office of binding the victim to the stake; whereupon Ajigartta said, "If you will give me another hundred cows, I will

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perform the duty." This was done, the victim was bound, and the priests walked round him, bearing burning brands of sacred grass. But still there was no *immolator* amongst the ministering Brahmans, and Ajigartta, the father of the victim, once more said he would perform the service needed for another hundred cows, and his offer being accepted he went forth to sharpen his knife. In the interval thus afforded, the victim at the stake began to think of escape, and saying to himself, "These people will put me to death as if I were not a man, but an animal," he perceived that his only hope was in Divine succour, and praying heartily to all the Gods in turn, his bonds at length fell off, and he became free, and the king was cured of his complaint.

The most remarkable part of this story is the end, in which Sunahsepas refuses to return to his father, saying, "All present saw you with the instrument of immolation in your hand: such a sight was never beheld even amongst Sudras;" meaning, that even a Sudra would not sacrifice a son, but his father's officiating at all in the capacity of immolator showed a vile Sudra disposition, which Sunahsepas considered unpardonable, and he therefore renounced his own family, and became the adopted son of Viswamitra, who had officiated as chief-priest on the occasion. Fifty of Viswamitra's sons objected to this proceeding, and were in consequence degraded to the condition of the barbarous tribes, whilst the other fifty acceded to their father's wishes, and welcomed his newly adopted son, saying, "We give thee, Sunahsepas, precedence, and acknowledge ourselves to be subordinate to thee."* From this story we infer, first,

* On Human Sacrifices, by Professor Wilson; J.R.A.S., part i. vol. xiii. p. 96.

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that Brahmans who could or would perform the office of immolator were few in number, and held in disrespect; secondly, that Brahmans generally regarded animal sacrifice as a vile Sudra practice, or a custom belonging to inferior races; and thirdly, that a difference of opinion on this subject gave rise to dissensions and divisions amongst the descendants of the Vedic patriarchs and sages.

Many similar legends occur in Brahmanical literature, the sacrifice never being proposed as a propitiation of evil beings, but merely as an offering to benevolent deities of an object precious to the worshipper; and a man is never sacrificed, but a substitute taken in his place. The horse-sacrifice was probably adopted by the Hindu race from the Scythians, before they crossed the Indus; and human sacrifice they probably witnessed amongst the inferior race whom they found as aborigines in India; but the Brahmans recoiled from both the customs, and as they could not at once sweep away the popular ceremonies and festivals, they endeavoured to invest them with symbolic meanings. Mr. Colebrooke gives this opinion of the *Aswamedha* (horse-sacrifice), and the *Purushamedha* (human sacrifice), as described in a Brahmana, or treatise, appended to the Yajur-Veda. For the first of these festivals, a certain number of animals were tied to posts, but after prayers had been offered up they were let loose without injury. In the second festival men were bound as victims, and prayers and hymns recited, alluding to the allegorical immolation of Viraj, in which solemn sacrifice "spring was the butter, summer the fuel, and sultry weather the oblation." As soon as the prescribed prayers and hymns were concluded, the victims were set free, and an offering of butter thrown upon the sacrificial fire.

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Whether these mysterious, vague ideas received any impulse from recollections of primeval revelation we cannot determine, but the more obvious source is Brahmanical contemplation, striving to elevate religion from the less civilized views and customs prevailing in the country. For this object the Brahmanical philosophers withdrew from society and gave themselves up to religious contemplation: and such meditation under the skies and groves of India becomes an intense abstraction, scarcely to be conceived by the active inhabitants of northern climes. The glorious world on which they looked, and the unclouded sun on which man cannot look direct, convinced them that Power and Purity were not ephemeral, although these outward and visible signs would perish; and gradually they evolved the doctrine, that worldly views and practices could procure nothing beyond mere worldly advantages, but that man might reach the Eternal by casting the whole force of his thoughts and his affections upon the abstraction Brahme. "What is Brahme?" is the usual theme of their Upanishads. Bhrigu asked this question of Varuna; and Varuna answered, that food, mind, speech were Brahme, and that Brahme, in fact, is that by which all beings are produced and supported, and towards which they all tend. But Bhrigu is not satisfied until Varuna further explains that life, intellect, meditation, and joy are also Brahme.* On another occasion, five persons conversant with holy writ go from one authority to another, trying to determine the questions, "What is our soul?" and "Who is Brahme?" The only person capable of giving the necessary instruction is a king, called Aswapati, son of Kaikeya; and he would take no notice of them until they came in the humble guise

* Colebrooke, vol. i. p. 77.

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of pupils, each bearing a log of fire-wood. The king then addressed his visitors in turn, saying, "Whom dost thou worship as the Soul?" The first said, "Heaven." "That," said the king, "is merely the head." The second said, "The Sun," and is told it is merely the eye. The third said, "Air," which is merely the breath; and a fourth answered, "Earth," which he is told is the feet of the universal Soul. Certain advantages are admitted to result from offerings to these individual objects of worship, but they are mere earthly benefits, and such offerings are like fuel thrown on ashes, whereas knowledge of the universal Soul is like the tip of dry grass cast into the fire.*

These Brahmanical notions are very different from the views usually expressed in the Rig-Veda, where the sun and fire are the highest symbols of the Godhead, and where on two occasions worshippers attain the condition of Gods without losing their individuality. In the first instance, men of the family of Bhrigu "cherished Agni" (fire), and in consequence were "born as gods;"† in the second case, the Ribhus retired to the forest, to perform penance and worship Savitri, and the effect of their devotion was, that "being yet mortals they acquired immortality."‡ Subsequent hymns represent both Bhrigus and Ribhus as associating with Indra and other celestials, and like them receiving offerings of praise and the usual oblations of butter and the soma-juice. Let us now observe the difference between these two stages of belief. In the Vedic hymns of about B.C. 1400 devout worshippers make offerings to the sun and fire, and receive "a divine birth," beyond which there is no happiness conceivable for mortals. In the

* Colebrooke, i. 84. † Rig-Veda, lviii. 6. ‡ *Ibid.*, cx. 1, 2.

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Brahmanas and Upanishads of about B.C. 800 Brahmans look upon fire-worship as procuring a renewal of merely perishable life, and upon the Gods as enjoying merely a limited term of existence. Beyond Agni and beyond the sun they perceive a sublimer object of adoration in *Brahme*, the universal Soul. But Brahme had no personality, and could receive no worship. Brahme pervaded the universe, and in proportion as any individual succeeded in approaching to the state of Brahme, he also lost his personality. The Brahmans had no idea of God as the creator and governor of the world, their sublimest notion being that of eternal essence universally diffused; plants, animals, men, and gods, all partook of this effusion of soul; but all visible life was mere illusion, and that which was held in common by all existence was the only reality. Brahmanical philosophy, in fact, confuses and puts to flight ordinary notions of reality by the very vehemence with which it struggles to escape from illusion. Birth or life was the entanglement of a portion of Brahme within the net of illusion, and from this entanglement not even death was an escape, for no sooner did one illusory existence close than another equally illusory commenced. The portion of soul which was disengaged by death, took possession of some other earthly tenement, it might be of an infant man, but it might with equal ease and probability be that of an animal or vegetable form. This appeared to the philosophical Brahmans as a necessary and logical deduction from their doctrine of the universal Soul, and they did not shrink from admitting the fact, although not at once anticipating all the consequences. The doctrine of Transmigration is touched upon in the Upanishads, and, although further developed

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in the Code of Manu, does not appear in its full detail and extravagance earlier than the Buddhist Sutras, written chiefly since our era, and the Brahmanical Puranas of modern Brahmanism, commencing about A.D. 900. Moral retribution was from the first combined with transmigration; and it was assumed that whilst men of the highest devotion had a chance of absorption into Brahme, or of being born again as inferior gods, bad men would become beasts or reptiles, and that all would be born and reborn, until the necessary penance had been made and the necessary perfection acquired, and all that was finite became merged into the infinite.

An interesting illustration of these opinions will be found in the following abstract of the Katha Upanishad, which has been translated by that distinguished and learned native of India, the late Rammohun Roy:—

A learned Brahman, named Vajasravasa, performed a sacrifice, at which he distributed his whole property; but the cows which he presented on the occasion as fees to the ministering priests were old and infirm, and this greatly distressed his son, the young Prince Nachiketa, who knew that whoever gave worn-out cows to priests was carried to the mansion where there is no felicity whatever. He begged therefore that his father would consign *him* in lieu of the cows, and persisted in asking to *whom* his father would consign him. The father, provoked at the boy's importunity, said hastily he would give him to Yama. This astonished the dutiful Nachiketa, for Yama was God of Death, and he wondered whether his father had had a previous engagement to this effect, or whether he spoke unawares in anger; but when the father recovered his self-possession,

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and was afflicted to think of the words which he had used, Nachiketa would not allow him to retract, saying, "Life is too short to make it worth while to gain advantages by means of falsehood and breach of promise."

Nachiketa proceeded therefore to the habitation of Yama; but the God of Death being absent from his dwelling, the youth remained three days unnoticed. Yama then returned, and was told by his family that for three days a Brahman had been his guest without receiving hospitality. Such an accident usually involved families in misfortune, for a Brahman guest is like fire, and good householders extinguish his anger by offering water, a seat, and food. Yama is in haste to offer every reparation in his power, and, in order "that bliss may attend him," begs that his guest will allow him to grant three favours in atonement for the pain which he had caused him. Nachiketa is readily conciliated, and makes the first of his three wishes a request that his father's distress may be removed, and his anger extinguished. To this Yama replied, "Thy father shall have the same regard for thee as before; and being assured of thy existence, he shall, through my power, repose the remaining nights of his life free from sorrow." The young man next begs for knowledge respecting fire, by which heaven is attained, where, he says, "there is no fear, and where even thou, Yama, canst not always exercise thy dominion." Yama consents, and proceeds to explain the nature of fire as the support of the world and yet residing in the body, and gives also particulars of the bricks which are requisite in forming and preserving sacred fire. Yama, gratified at the attentive manner in which his instruction is received, promised that in future sacred fire should be called after the name of

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Nachiketa, and presenting on the occasion with "a variously-coloured necklace," assured him that a wise worshipper of sacred fire attains the highest fruition after death, concluding, "Now, O Nachiketa, make thy third request." But the pupil's third request was to be instructed in the nature of the soul; and at this Yama demurred, saying, "Even Gods have doubted and disputed on this subject, which being obscure never can be thoroughly comprehended. Ask, O Nachiketa, some other favour instead of this." But Nachiketa replied that no other object was so desirable, and no instructor equal to Yama could be found. Still Yama begs him to withdraw this wish, and not to take advantage of his promise. "Request," says he, "sons and grandsons, each to live a hundred years; request cattle, elephants, gold, horses, long life, and empire upon earth," anything, in fact, however difficult of acquisition, in the mortal world. "Ask," Yama begins again, "for beautiful women, with elegant equipages, and musical instruments such as no man can acquire without our aid." But the young philosopher is not to be dissuaded, and replies calmly, that such enjoyments as Yama has been offering are short-lived, destroying the strength of the senses, and that the life even of the Gods is comparatively short. "Let therefore thy equipages and thy dancing and music remain with thee; no man can be satisfied with riches. . . . The only object I desire is what I have already begged of thee." "Do thou instruct us," he continues, "in that knowledge which removes doubts respecting existence after death; I, Nachiketa, cannot ask any other favour than this."

Yama, although God of Death, at length consents, saying, "Knowledge which leads to absorption is one thing,

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and rites which have fruition for their object another; each of these, producing different consequences, holds out to man inducements to follow it: the man who of these two chooses knowledge, is blessed; and he who for the sake of reward practises rites, is excluded from the enjoyment of eternal beatitude." Yama enlarges further upon this idea, and expresses admiration at Nachiketa's having refused to adopt practices which lead merely to riches and other perishable gratifications, to which men in general are attached; and he makes this curious confession, that he had himself performed the worship of the sacred fire in order to procure his present sovereignty of long duration, although he knew that all fruition obtained by means of rites was perishable. Yama then endeavours to explain the nature of the soul, saying, it is "that which is difficult to be comprehended, . . . veiled by the ideas acquired through the senses, . . . does not depart even in great danger, and exists unchangeable. A wise man, knowing the resplendent soul through a mind abstracted from worldly objects, . . . neither rejoices nor does he grieve." Yama endeavours further to explain the nature of the soul as "unborn, eternal," "not injured by the hurt which the body may receive: if any one ready to kill another imagine he can destroy his soul, and the other think that his soul shall suffer destruction, they both know nothing; for neither does it kill, nor is it killed." Some of Yama's assertions respecting the soul are given in antithesis, as, "The soul is the smallest of the small, and greatest of the great. The soul, although without motion, seems to go to furthest space; though it resides in the body at rest, yet it seems to move everywhere." * The soul moreover

* Referring to this passage, Dr. E. Röer remarks, that "the Upanishads

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"resides in fire, walks on the earth, enters like a guest into sacrificial vessels; dwells in man, in gods, in sacrifices; moves throughout the sky, seems to be born in water." A man who has this knowledge escapes from grief, and acquires absorption; but those who are ignorant of the universal Soul are born again as animals or trees. This was not however the fate of Nachiketa, for he acquired the divine doctrine, became freed from the consequences of good and evil acts, and acquired in consequence absorption into Brahme.*

Thus vaguely do these interesting speculations terminate. To be absorbed into an infinite abstraction was the rare privilege of the few who attained the highest knowledge; but for men in general the promise of future life was, to be born again as trees or beasts, as kings or gods, but only for a time of short duration. It may be said that the Hindu gasped for immortality, and that at a distance he beheld the blessed vision; but when he strained every nerve to bring it near and realize it to himself, the vision changed, and it was not immortality, but transmigration. The Hindu's belief in immortality is chained to transmigration like the rocket to the blackened stick, and when it leaves the stick it explodes into total darkness. The Hindu believed, not that man shall live again, but that man shares in a soul which cannot die.

"Though a hundred bodies like iron chains hold me down," says one of their Upanishads, "yet like a falcon I quickly rise."†

generally represent the difficulty of understanding the infinite soul by assigning to it contradictory predicates."—Bibliotheca Indica, Brihad Aranyaka, p. 73.

* Rammohun Roy, 'Translation of Passages from the Vedas,' p. 59.

† Colebrooke, vol. i. p. 51, Aitareya Aranya.

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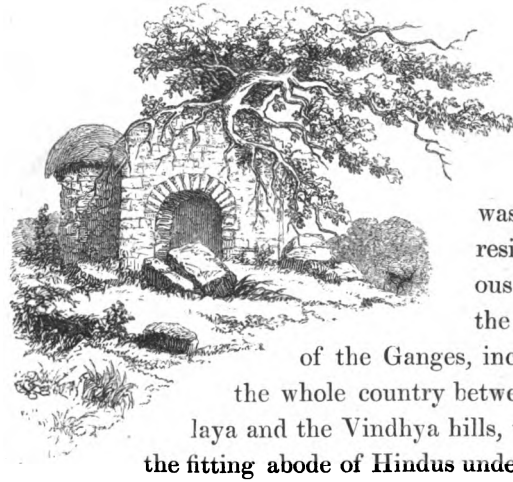
CHAPTER III.

"As little children lisp and tell of heaven,
So thoughts beyond their thought to those high Bards were given."

KEBLE.



WHILST the narrow strip of land on the Saraswati was the especial residence of studious Brahmans, all the fertile plains of the Ganges, including in fact the whole country between the Himalaya and the Vindhya hills, was considered the fitting abode of Hindus under Brahmanical guidance. Between these mountains "lies the tract which the wise have named Aryavarta," says the Law-book; Aryavarta meaning the abode of *Aryas*, or respectable men. On a tributary of the Ganges, called the river Gogra, to the south-east of this district, was placed the oldest or earliest

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Hindu city, Ayodhya, occupying nearly the same site as the modern city of Oude, where remains of the ancient buildings are yet visible.

The first king who reigned at Ayodhya was Vaivaswata, a descendant of the sun, called in consequence the founder of the Solar race. One of his posterity, named Ikshwaku, was Raja of Mithila, a kingdom nearly corresponding with the modern Tirhut; and other monarchs of the Solar line were established at Vesali, in the district now known as Little Tirhut. The branch of the royal family called the Lunar dynasty colonized more adventurously, beginning with Benares and extending their kingdoms across the Vindhya hills to Berar, along the Nerbudda to Guzerat, and thence northwards to Mathura on the Jumna, and to Hastinapura on the Ganges.* The Lunar dynasties however appear to have had more of Scythian manners, and less of Brahmanical civilization, than the Solar line of Ayodhya.

In the time of King Vaivaswata, Caste had not become hereditary, for it is reported that whilst some of his sons were Kshatriyas and kings, one founded a tribe of Brahmans, one was a Vaisya, and another a Sudra. Some of the early kings are distinguished as having themselves *established* Caste amongst their subjects, and instances are even recorded of Brahmanical families proceeding from Kshatriya races or families. By degrees however Brahmans propounded their scheme of Hereditary Caste with great authority, as recorded in their Law-book, called the Code of Manu. This Code is a later composition than the Upanishads, and adopts the same religious doctrine, with additions, giving new links to the chain by which they con-

* H. H. Wilson, Vishnu Purana, Introd., pp. lxvii.-lxix.

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nect the visible world with the self-existent universal Soul. First, Brahme created the waters and placed in them a seed, which became an egg; and in that egg, "bright as gold and blazing like the luminary with a thousand beams,"* Brahmá was born; Brahmá being as it were an isolated portion of Brahme, assuming individuality in order to create the world; this was not however accomplished by any direct process, for Brahmá produced Viraj, and then retired into inactivity. Viraj in like manner produced Manu, and upon him devolved the further duty of creation. Manu produced the Rishis, or Sages, of the Rig-Veda, Angiras, Bhrigu, etc., ten in number. The ten Rishis produced semi-divine beings of various degrees, and the whole vegetable and animal creation, endowed with internal consciousness, and sensible of pleasure and pain by means of past actions.† The work of creation was thus nominally attributed to many agents; but practically the scheme of the Code makes Brahme give place to the more active Brahmá, and Viraj retire to make room for his successor, Manu.

This celebrated Law-book commences in the following strain of dignity:—"Manu sat reclined with his attention fixed; the divine sages approached, and making salutations delivered the following address: 'Deign, sovereign ruler, to apprise us of the sacred laws in their order, as they must be followed by the four classes.'" Thus solicited, Manu replied, that for the sake of preserving the universe Brahmá had produced four classes of men, and allotted separate duties to each. These four classes were Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras, who sprang respectively from the mouth, the arm, the thigh, and the foot of Brahmá.‡

* Code of Manu, i. 9. † *Ibid.*, iv. 49. ‡ *Ibid.*, i. 87.

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Manu makes no allusion to the *five* classes of the Rig-Veda, says nothing of any changes, nothing of Brahmá as a new object of worship, or of kings having once had equal rights with Brahmans to minister in sacrifice; but he enunciates Brahmanical supremacy as a fact coeval with creation. The duties of the four Castes are thus defined:—Brahmans are to read the Veda and to teach it, to sacrifice, to conduct sacrifices for others, to give alms if rich, and to receive gifts when poor; Kshatriyas are to defend the people, give alms, and read the Veda; Vaisyas are to keep cattle, carry on trade, lend at interest, and cultivate the land; whilst to Sudras one principal duty is assigned, namely, to serve the before-mentioned classes.

The education of the first three Castes is most sagaciously consigned to Brahmans, and a series of auspicious acts prescribed, which commence even before a child is born. In the first or third year of his infant life he must be tonsured; and in his eighth year for a Brahman, or later for the two other Castes, or at any age up to sixteen for Brahmans, and twenty-two and twenty-four for Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, he must be invested with the mark of the Caste to which he owes his birth.* This is a most important ceremony, conferring, in Brahmanical language, a second birth: it is performed by passing what is called a sacrificial thread about the neck and beneath one shoulder of the youth; whilst the Brahman teacher, called Acharya, pronounces the sacred Gayatri, preceded by the mysterious triliteral syllable *Om*, the import of which will be considered when the systems of Brahmanical philosophy become the object of our study. Until this investiture or second birth has taken place, the

* Code of Manu, ii. 26-36.

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young man is unable to read the sacred Vedas, or to perform sacrifice;* and if investiture is delayed beyond the age of sixteen for a Brahman, or a few years later for the other classes, the youths become outcasts,† to whom Brahmans must not teach the Veda, and with whom they must have no connection. The sacrificial cord is in fact the distinction between a twice-born man and a Sudra; all who wear this token of having received Brahmanical instruction are of the privileged Castes, and all who are without it are Sudras. The term 'sacrificial cord' means a cord which entitles the wearer to the privilege of sacrifice. Certain ceremonies are performed for girls as well as boys, but neither girls nor women are invested with the cord, and have in consequence no right to sacrifice. The Brahman from whom a youth receives investiture becomes his Acharya, or teacher, and a pupil is taught to regard such a teacher with even greater reverence than his natural parents, "because a second or divine birth ensures life both in this world and hereafter eternally."‡ Even a little child teaching holy texts from the Veda to his uncles, is entitled to call them "little sons;" for holy sages have always said "Child" to an ignorant man, and "Father" to a teacher of Scripture.§ The sanctity attached in the Code to the Vedic hymns (or Veda Sanhita) is somewhat remarkable, for already the language in which they are written was becoming obsolete, the Vedic Gods superseded, and the organization of society entirely different. The Code never quotes them, although it refers with pride of ancestry to Angiras and Bhrigu and other Vedic Rishis; but the only text of which it shows any knowledge is the address to the divine light of the sun

* Code, ii. 721. † *Ibid.*, ii. 38. ‡ *Ibid.*, ii. 146–169. § *Ibid.*, ii. 151–153.

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for guidance, which is the holy Gayatri still in daily use. Indeed Mr. Colebrooke's observations on the superstitious modes in which Hindus now repeat the Vedas seem to apply even to the early period of the Code. Pupils must learn accurately the name of the Rishi by whom the verses were first uttered; but the verses may be repeated backwards or forwards, joined or disjoined.* The sons of Rajas appear to have received instruction from a preceptor resident at courts, and the children of Kshatriyas and Vaisyas probably attended their teachers daily; but the sons of Brahmans went to reside with their spiritual father, and performed for him menial service, such as collecting wood for the holy fire, sweeping the floor, and fetching the water required for daily use. The noviciate of a young Brahman required abstinence from pleasure and luxury: he must refrain from honey, flesh-meat, perfumes, chaplets of flowers, black powder for his eyes, sandals, umbrellas, dancing, music, and gaming.† Brahman pupils still live with their teachers, and are still restricted to the simplest fare; but this appears now as much the dictate of necessity as of principle, for the teachers are usually extremely poor. The course of instruction indicated in the Code comprises the Upanishads, grammar, prosody, and astronomy; and whilst the teacher is advised to use sweet gentle speech and give no pain, of the pupil it is said,—

"As he who digs with a spade comes to a spring of water, so the student who humbly serves his teacher attains the knowledge which lies deep in his teacher's mind."‡

The Code of Manu ranks reverence for Acharyas as one of the first of virtues, and requires a pupil "to stand

* Colebrooke, i. 20. † Code, ii. 177. ‡ *Ibid.*, ii. 218.

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with the palms of his hands joined, looking at the face of his preceptor;" in his presence, to "keep his right arm uncovered, to eat less, to wear a coarser mantle," and show endless tokens of respect.

"When his teacher is nigh, let his couch or his bench be always placed low; when his preceptor's eye can observe him, let him not sit carelessly or at ease.

"Let him never pronounce the mere name of his tutor, even in his absence; nor even mimic his gait, his speech, or his manner.

"In whatever place either true but censorious, or false and defamatory, discourse is held concerning his teacher, let him there cover his ears or remove to another place.

"By censuring his preceptor, though justly, he will be born an ass; by falsely defaming him, a dog; by using his goods without leave, a small worm; by envying his merit, a larger insect or reptile."*

A pupil is forbidden to give presents during the period of residence in a teacher's house; but when the course of instruction is concluded, he may "give the venerable man some valuable thing to the best of his power,—a field, or gold, a cow, an umbrella, a pair of sandals, or even any very excellent vegetable: thus will he gain the affectionate remembrance of his instructor."†

The first duty of a twice-born man, who has performed his ablution with stated ceremonies and has returned home, is to espouse a wife of the same class with himself.‡ But he must not marry into a family "which omits prescribed acts of religion," nor into one remarkable for ill-health, be they ever so great, or rich in kine, goats, sheep, gold, or grain; nor must he marry a girl with reddish hair, . . . nor one immoderately talkative, nor one with inflamed eyes,

* Code, ii. 198–201. † *Ibid.*, ii. 246. ‡ *Ibid.*, iii. 4–10.

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nor one with the name of a constellation, tree, river of a barbarous nation, a winged creature, a snake;

"But let him choose for his wife a girl whose form has no defect, . . . who walks gracefully, like a flamingo or a young elephant."

After a Brahman has married a wife of rank equal to his own, he is to spend this second portion of his life as a happy householder, making daily offerings to fire, with some additional ceremonies at the close of each fortnight, and a moonplant festival at the end of each year.* If he has not sufficient wealth, he may attend on cattle or apply himself to agriculture; but keeping herds is preferable, because "tillage gives pain to sentient creatures, and is dependent upon the labour of bulls."† Many occupations are specified as wholly inconsistent with Brahmanical sanctity; amongst these are playing with dice,‡ singing, striking his arm, and dancing,§ dealing in tila seeds, which produce oil required in holy rites, and holding them back in hope of greater gain.‖ Strict warnings are given against holding intercourse with people who do not believe in the Veda, people "who subsist like cats," or "live like rapacious water-birds;"¶ he must not reside in a city governed by a Sudra king, nor "long upon a mountain,"** which looks very much as if the hill-tribes were then as now beyond Brahmanical control. One of the worst sins however which a Brahman could commit was to impart knowledge of sacrifice or of Scripture to Sudras, or to receive a present from a king not born in the Kshatriya Caste;†† this enactment being necessary to the preservation of strict hereditary caste. But beyond this a higher mark was

* Code, iv. 25. ‡ *Ibid.*, iv. 74. ‖ *Ibid.*, x. 90. ** *Ibid.*, iv. 60, 61.
† *Ibid.*, x. 81. § *Ibid.*, iv. 64. ¶ *Ibid.*, iv. 30. †† *Ibid.*, iv. 84.

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aimed at, for according to the Code it degraded a Brahman to receive gifts from an avaricious or irreligious king; and even if the giver of the gifts were unexceptionable,* a Brahman must avoid the habit of taking them, "since by taking many gifts his divine light soon fades." †

"Let him, then, who knows the law be fearful of presents; . . . since an ignorant man, even by a small gift, may become helpless as a cow in a bog."

A Brahman was to be distinguished for learning and virtue; and if such a one pronounced texts for the sake of gain he was "a covetous wretch, who displays the flag of virtue, a pretender, a deluder of the people," ‡ and the giver of gifts to so hypocritical a person shared in this punishment, for—

"As he who tries to pass over deep water in a boat of stone sinks to the bottom, so those two ignorant men, the receiver and the giver, sink to a region of torment." §

In the translation of the Code by Sir William Jones, the word *priest* is used throughout as corresponding precisely with the term Brahman; but to this it is objected, that to perform the offices of religion was only *one* of a Brahman's occupations, and one which he considered inconsistent with

* Code, iv. 87. † *Ibid.*, iv. 186. ‡ *Ibid.*, iv. 191.

§ Code, iv. 194. Some of the acts forbidden to Brahmans are both curious and unaccountable, as "he must not gaze on the sun, whether rising or setting, or eclipsed or reflected in water." He must not "run whilst it rains." He must not "look on his own image in water." When he sees the bow of Indra in the sky, he must not show it to any man. He must not step over a string to which a calf is tied, and he must not interrupt a cow when she is drinking; and he must not wash his feet in a pan of mixed metal." These and many other curious particulars will be found in the fourth chapter of the Code.

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the highest sanctity ;* a wealthy Brahman always employing, therefore, professional priests to perform religious ceremonies or minister for him in sacrifice. To give instruction in the sacred books, to give political counsel, and to administer justice, were the occupations preferred by a Brahman during middle life. No asceticism is then required: he is even desired not to waste himself with hunger, nor to wear old and sordid clothes; but with his hair and beard properly trimmed, his passions subdued, and his mantle white, "let him carry a staff of *Venu*, a ewer with water in it, a handful of *kusa*-grass, or a copy of the Vedas, with a pair of bright golden rings in his ears."†

But when middle life is past, and he has paid, as the law directs, his debts to the Sages, to the Manes, and to the Gods, the Brahman may resign all to his son, and retire to some solitary place to meditate on the divine nature of the soul.‡

We need not suppose that this rule of retiring from active life in middle age was ever the universal custom of the Brahman caste; but, doubtless, those who aimed at great learning or spiritual perfection did adopt the practice, and through their self-denying struggles and mortifications obtained that paramount influence which is so remarkable a feature in early Sanskrit literature. The language of the Code upon this subject is so beautiful and expressive, that the quotation of a few verses from the commencement of the sixth chapter is irresistible:—

"Having thus remained in the order of a housekeeper as the law ordains, let the twice-born man who had before completed his

* Elphinstone, Hist. of India, pp. 13, 14, *and note.*

† Code, iv. 34, 35.

‡ *Ibid.*, iv. 257, 258.

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studentship dwell in a forest, his faith being firm and his organs wholly subdued.

"When the father of a family perceives his muscles becoming flaccid and his hair grey, and sees the child of his child, let him then seek refuge in a forest.

"Abandoning all food eaten in towns and all his household utensils, let him repair to the lonely wood, committing the care of his wife to her sons, or accompanied by her.

"Let him take up his consecrated fire, and all his domestic implements for making oblations to it, and, departing from the town to the forest, let him dwell in it with complete power over his organs.

"With many sorts of pure food, such as holy sages used to eat, with green herbs, roots, and fruit, let him perform the five great sacraments. . . .

"Let him wear a black antelope's hide, or a vesture of bark; let him bathe evening and morning; let him suffer the hairs of his head, his beard, and his nails to grow continually.

"From such food as himself may eat, let him to the utmost of his power make offerings and give alms; and with presents of water, roots, and fruit, let him honour those who visit his hermitage.

"Let him be constantly engaged in reading the Veda; patient of all extremities, universally benevolent, with a mind intent on the Supreme Being; a perpetual giver, but no receiver of gifts; with tender affection for all animated bodies.

"Let him, as the law directs, make oblations on the hearth with three sacred fires, not omitting in due time the ceremonies to be performed at the conjunction and opposition of the moon."

The hermit's food, like that of a Brahman pupil, was considerably restricted: no honey, no flesh-meat, no mushrooms, no fruit or roots produced in a town; but green herbs produced in earth or water, oils formed in fruits, and "pure grains, the food of ancient sages." This pure grain, brought home by himself, he may boil or make into cakes, and, as the law ordains, present oblations.

"He may eat what is mellowed by fire, and he may eat what is ripened by time; and either let him break hard fruits with a stone, or let his teeth serve as a pestle.

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"Either let him pluck enough for a day, or let him gather enough for a month, or let him collect enough for six months, or lay up enough for a year."*

By degrees the severity of the hermit's self-denial is increased, and absolute suffering is prescribed in order to subdue the bodily frame and enable the spirit to escape from time and mingle with eternity. "To slide backwards and forwards on the ground; to stand a whole day on tiptoe; to sit in the hot season exposed to five fires, and stand uncovered during the rains," are amongst the trials recommended; that by "enduring harsher and harsher mortifications, he may dry up his bodily frame," and enter upon the fourth and closing period of a Brahman's life, when,

"Having reposited his holy fires, as the law directs, in his mind, let him live without external fire, without a mansion, wholly silent, feeding upon roots and fruits."†

When the hermit assumes a state of silence and gives up the use of fire, he becomes a Sanyasi, who must eat little, and ask but once in the day for food.

"At the time when the smoke of kitchen fires has ceased, when the pestle lies motionless, when the burning charcoal is extinguished, when people have eaten, and when dishes are removed, let the Sanyasi beg for food.‡

"For missing it let him not be sorrowful, nor for gaining it let him be glad; let him care only for a sufficiency to support life."

Indifference is the state which he must endeavour to acquire, and "by the absence of hate and affection, and by giving no pain to sentient creatures," to become fit for immortality. His means of showing kindness towards living

* Code of Manu, vi. 17. This had been done by a Hermit in the Hitopadesa, but a rat discovers his little store. "Hiranyaka, the prince of mice," was for ever eating the food of Churakarna, a religious mendicant, who had accumulated a hoard in a hole.—Hitopadesa, ch. i., fables v., vi.

† Code, vi. 31.

‡ *Ibid.*, vi. 56, 57.

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creatures are extremely limited; but for the sake of preserving minute animals, he must never walk without looking on the ground; and for fear of destroying insects, he must not drink water until it has been strained.*

The Sanyasi is pointedly warned against explaining omens and prodigies, or showing skill in palmistry or astrology, to which occupations his reputation for sanctity would expose him. He is even desired to clip his hair, his nails, and his beard, in order perhaps to excite less attention; and the only occupation suitable to his situation is meditation,†—meditation upon the transmigration of men caused by their sinful deeds; on their separation from those whom they love, and their union with those whom they hate; on their strength overpowered by old-age; on their bodies racked by disease, and their agonizing departure from this corporeal frame;‡ and on "the progress of this internal spirit through various bodies high and low," which is admitted to be a progress hard to be discerned "by men of unimproved intellect."§

We dwell with particular pleasure on the picture of a tranquil philosopher who attains equanimity towards all creatures, who can bear a reproachful speech with patience,‖ and who wishes neither for life nor death, but expects his appointed time as a hired servant expects his wages;¶ and we could almost envy the Brahman the indifference with which he anticipates leaving his body, "a mansion with bones for its rafters and beams," a mansion "infested by age and sorrow, . . . incapable of standing long." "Such a mansion," says the Brahman, "let the vital soul cheerfully quit; as a tree leaves the bank of a river, or as a bird

* Code, vi. 68–46.
† *Ibid.*, vi. 50, 52.
‡ *Ibid.*, vi. 61.
§ *Ibid.*, vi. 73.
‖ *Ibid.*, vi. 47.
¶ *Ibid.*, vi. 45.

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leaves the branch of a tree . . . thus is he who leaves his body delivered from the ravening shark of the world."*

But we must not lose sight of the cutting line which these philosophers drew between what is good for this life, and what is good for life hereafter. Our Brahman thought it better to meditate upon eternity than to contend with the ravening shark of the world; but he never thought of taming the shark; or, supposing its ravening propensities unalterable, he never thought of defending society from its incursions, or of finding happiness and blessedness in promoting the happiness and blessedness of others. Nevertheless the Brahman's view of old-age and death is very beautiful, and, as far as we know, comes nearer to the pathos and sublimity of Hebrew Scripture than any other ante-Christian record.

Turning from the Brahmans to the Kings, we feel reminded that Brahmans were the authors of the Code; for alas! the earnest eloquence, ease, and graphic detail which we have been admiring, vanish when kings become the subject; and in pompous words a mere superficial view is given of what Brahmans apparently intended to be mere superficial authority. The very word for King in Sanskrit, *Raja*, signifies *to shine* as well as *to rule*, and the Brahmans took pains to make their king—

> "As glorious as the autumn's evening sky,
> Bright with the moon, and set with radiant stars."†

A part of his daily duty was to enter his hall, or hold his court in "decently splendid attire," and stand there to gratify his subjects with kind words and looks. In the afternoon he is to gratify his warriors in the same way, by going forth completely arrayed to review his troops, ele-

* Code, vi. 76–78. † Hindu Theatre, vol. ii. p. 231.

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phants, horses,* cars, etc. In fact, one reads of kings in the Code with a feeling that they are puppets in an imaginary pageant; but the regulations concerning them are nevertheless worth studying, for although never fully realized they are alluded to and partially recognized in general Sanskrit literature. The King is exhorted to conduct himself with humility towards Brahmans learned in the three Vedas, to avoid idleness and vice, and to appoint seven or eight ministers versed in the holy books, skilled in the use of weapons, and whose lineage is noble. He must also have a very learned Brahman as a confidential adviser, and various other ministers, usually Brahmans, who assist in the council which the King meets every morning; "ascending up the back of a mountain, or going privately to a terrace, a bower, a forest, or a lonely place," that he may consult them unobserved, for it is said that "that prince of whose weighty secrets all assemblies of men are ignorant, shall attain dominion over the whole earth." The secrecy required in these Brahmanical councils, in Ayodhya and the other early kingdoms of Hindostan, offers a striking contrast to the public assemblies of the Rajputs in Guzerat and at Mathura, as recorded in after-years. From this council 'with closed doors' the Code requires that all blind, deaf, and decrepit persons should be removed, because those who are suffering in this world for sins committed in previous births, are apt to betray counsel; and for the same reason talking birds, and above all, women must be excluded. An account of the subjects on which a council deliberates occupies a large portion of the chapter assigned to the King's duties. The whole question of war and negotiation is discussed, and the qualifications required in an ambassador:

* Code, vii. 145, 146, 222.

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he must have a pure hand and a pure heart; he must be handsome, intrepid, eloquent, have an excellent memory, and be well acquainted with countries and times; but it is also essential that he understand external signs and hints, that he may discover the arts of a foreign prince through the acts of his confidential servants. By the aid of this illustrious ambassador and his secret negotiations the enemy is to be reduced by internal dissension, and by well-applied gifts all such leaders are to be gained as can be safely brought over. For this purpose spies of five descriptions are recommended; as, "active and artful youths, degraded anchorites, distressed husbandmen, decayed merchants, and fictitious penitents," who are all to be seen and paid in private. Intrigue is no disgrace, and prudence a cardinal virtue; the Code giving its highest commendation to the king who foresees the good and evil to ensue from his measures, and so arranges his affairs that no ally, neutral prince, or enemy, ever gets an advantage over him. On the other hand, there is no praise for heroic daring, or hopeless valour, or generous defence of country, home and hearth. The negative duty of not turning his face from battle is the only military duty inculcated upon kings and soldiers, and the rules of war in general are tame and dull; although they read very like rules for preserving peace, they do not excite respect and confidence, because they have the air of being drawn up in seclusion, by students who had never seen or felt the troubles and difficulties of actual warfare or political contention; and, on the other hand, one is irresistibly inclined to attribute them to learned men, anxious to be independent of the Military Caste. The most pleasing part of the subject is the mercy required in the choice of weapons, and also towards captives; these rules have fortu-

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nately been translated in metre, which gives a most opportune relief to this unusually prosaic prose:

"Let the soldier, good in battle, never guilefully conceal
(Wherewithal to smite the unwary) in his staff the treacherous steel;
Let him scorn to barb his javelin; let the valiant ne'er anoint
With fell poison-juice his arrows, ne'er put fire upon the point.
In his car, or on his war-horse, should he chance his foe to meet,
Let him smite not if he find him lighted down upon his feet;
Let him spare one standing suppliant, with his closed hands raised on high,
Spare him whom his long hair loosen'd blinds and hinders from to fly,—
Spare him if he sink exhausted; spare him if for life he crave;
Spare him crying out for mercy, 'Take me, for I am thy slave.'
Still remembering his duty, never let the soldier smite
One unarm'd, defenceless, mourning for one fallen in the fight;
Never strike the sadly wounded; never let the brave attack
One by sudden terror smitten, turning in base flight his back."*

The Law-book mentions so few names of places, kings, or kingdoms, that we may almost suspect it of wishing to avoid identifying itself with any particular time or place: it is written for all time and for all Hindus, and in consequence gives very few *data* enabling us to judge how far Hindus and Brahmans had penetrated. They do not however appear to have been confined to the plains of the Ganges, which the Code calls Aryavarta, for allusions are made to most desirable forts on hills, which one hundred bowmen can defend against ten thousand. Such natural defences would be difficult to find near the Ganges; but Gwalior and Dowlatabad and other basaltic rocks of Malwa and Rajputana answer well to the description. Mathura is likewise mentioned; the men of Mathura being tall and light, and therefore good soldiers for the van of an army. The coun-

* R. T. Griffith, Specimens of Indian Poetry, p. 9.

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try was divided into a number of small unequal states, of which the weaker sought the protection of the stronger; and the conquest of foreign States *appears* to be alluded to, for it is recommended that the deities and virtuous priests of a conquered country be respected, but we can only suppose that this refers to slight varieties amongst Hindu States. It may be a recommendation to kings of the Solar race to be tolerant towards the usages of the Lunar dynasties, or to Hindus settled in Oude to be liberal towards Rajputs in Malwa, or Saurashtrians in modern Guzerat; but it is not probable that despotic and exclusive Brahmans recommended positive toleration towards the religions of people whom they called Sudras, robbers, or barbarians. If they conquered Scythian tribes in the northern mountains, whom they called Hunas and Sakas, they did not attempt to hold them or govern them, because this was apparently impossible to the philosophic theories of the Brahmans, which affected the Court and capital, but made very little impression on the people as a nation. It may be for want of knowing how to extract the information required, but with mere ordinary apparatus for this purpose the Code is far from satisfactory upon the subject of the Kshatriya, or Military Caste: if it gave mere law we could not complain, but whilst we are told that a king's displeasure is worse than lightning, and consumes whole families by its destructive violence, and that Abundance rises on her lotus-leaf whenever a king is well pleased and gracious, we get no facts to show in what manner a king ever has or ever can exercise individual enterprise in promoting the welfare or improvement of his kingdom.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE RAMAYANA.

"The lark soars upwards and is gone;
His voice is heard, but body there is none.
* * * *
So poets' songs are with us, though they die,
And earth inherits the rich melody."—HOOD.

HITHERTO we have been like voyagers sailing towards an unknown land, striving to catch glimpses through a telescope of the leading features of the country, but baffled by twilight when hoping to make more detailed observations. Now that we are about to look upon the graphic pages of epic poetry, we shall feel a change in our sensations, as if when nearing our port at dusk the coast should suddenly appear illuminated by a revolving lighthouse, and a palace, a procession, a sacrifice, or a tournament were for a moment visible in the rich red light, or in the succeeding clear white rays of the lofty beacon. Such are the transitory high-coloured views of life in Ancient India, which we get from the portions of the Sanskrit Epics which have been

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translated; and it is more especially upon the kings and courts, so slighted in the Code, that they delight to shed their glowing gleams.

The Ramayana is the more ancient, and also the more connected of these poems, and commences with the history of a King of Ayodhya, an ancient city on the river Gogra, then called the Srayu (tributary to the Ganges). King of Ayodhya is his title, although Ayodhya was merely the capital of the province of Kosala, corresponding nearly with the modern province of Oude. Ayodhya held in fact nearly the same position as the modern city of Oude, where remains of old buildings are still visible.* "The streets and alleys of this city were admirably disposed, and the principal streets well watered. It was beautified with gardens, fortified with gates, . . . crowded with charioteers and messengers furnished with arms, adorned with banners, filled with dancing girls and dancing men, crowded with elephants, horses, and chariots, merchants and ambassadors from various countries. It resembled a mine of jewels, or the residence of *Sri*, the walls were variegated with divers sorts of gems like the divisions of a chess-board,† the houses formed one continued row of equal height, resounding with the music of the tabor, . . . the twang of the bow, and the sacred sound of the Veda. It was perfumed with incense, chaplets of flowers, and articles for sacrifice, by their odour cheering the heart."‡

In this city of well-fed happy people no one practised a

* Oude is seventy-nine miles from Lucknow, and adjoins Fyzabad.

† This expression seems to indicate that in India, as in Assyria, walls were ornamented in mosaic. See Fergusson.

‡ Cary, vol. i. pp. 95–98.

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calling not his own; none were without relations; the men loved their wives, the women were faithful and obedient to their husbands; no one was without earrings; no one went unperfumed; no Brahman was without the constant fire, and no man gave less than a thousand rupees to the Brahmans. This city was guarded by warriors as a mountain den by lions, filled with horses from Kamboja and other places, and elephants from the Vindhya and Himalaya mountains, and governed as Indra governs his city, by Dasaratha, chief of the race of Ikshwaku.*

This King was perfectly skilled in the Vedas and Vedangas, beloved by his people, a great charioteer, and constant in sacrifice. His courtiers were wise, capable of understanding a nod, and constantly devoted to him. Eight Brahmans are mentioned as chief counsellors, two as *chosen priests*, and these appear to have been his prime ministers; six others were also in office. "Surrounded by all these counsellors, learned, faithful, eminent, seeking by wise counsels the good of the kingdom, Dasaratha shone resplendent as the sun irradiating the world."†

But even Dasaratha, King of Ayodhya, had a grief,—he pined because he had no son; and consulting his Brahmans, they brought a Rishi, or eminent devotee, to court, to perform the Aswamedha, or horse sacrifice, supposed to ensure the boon desired by him who performs it with sufficient magnificence and liberality. The sacrifice succeeded, the divinities were propitiated, and the King's three wives became the mothers of four sons. The first and favourite

* The above is given nearly *verbatim*, with Cary's translation, only omitting repetitions and redundancies.

† Cary, vol. i. p. 3.

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wife had two sons, Rama and Lakshman; Rama being the eldest of the four, and destined by his father to assist him in his advancing years, and succeed to the throne at his demise.*

Nothing is said of the young princes during their infancy; but when they are on the verge of manhood, a Rishi named Viswamitra appears at court, soliciting the King to allow Rama to go with him to his hermitage in the hills, and clear it from tormenting fiends, who destroyed all his attempts at a ten-night sacrifice by sprinkling the altar with blood. The King is distracted by contending feelings, his reverence for the Sage and his love for his son being equally unbounded. After trembling, fainting, and recovering, he says that his Rama, the lotus-eyed, has not yet attained his sixteenth year, and says he will himself go. He is an archer invincible; "as long as life remains will I maintain the combat with these night-wanderers, . . . the sacrifice shall be effectually protected, . . . but Rama thou must not take; he is a child, . . . unable to bear arms, . . . incapable of coping with the wily Rakshasas; . . . thou must not take my Rama; . . . by me, an old man, are these sons begotten, . . . dearer to me than life itself."

This pathetic remonstrance kindles anger in the breast of the Sage, at which the whole earth was moved, and "fear seized even the Gods." The prime minister interposes, the King gives way, and his two sons, Rama and Lakshman, are sent away with Viswamitra.† To qualify Rama for the enterprise was the first consideration: travelling along the south bank of the river, the Sage bids him touch the water whilst receiving instruction, which shall make him proof

* Cary, vol. i. p. 232 † *Ibid.*, p. 251.

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against fatigue, disease, or change of form, and give him such strength of arm that no one in the three worlds shall be his equal.* The next day Viswamitra and his pupils crossed the river, and heard the mighty sound of waters caused by the confluence of the Surayu and the Jahnavi; and after defeating a female demon, who infested a forest "dark as a cloud," Rama was presented with celestial weapons. Thus prepared, the party proceeded to the hermitage, and in "dreadful combat" Rama encountered and destroyed the "night-wandering Rakshasas."†

The point to which the holy guide next conducted his young pupils was Mithila, where a certain king named Janaka resided, whose daughters and nieces would, he thought, prove desirable wives for the four young princes. The King of Mithila received the travellers with much solemnity: joining his hands together he said to the Rishi, "O thou Godlike, take a place among the great sages;" and having seated the holy man he drew near with joined palms, saying, "O thou heavenly one, today am I blessed with the water of immortality;" and then turning to his young companions, asked who were "those noble youths, of majestic gait like the elephant, courageous as the tiger and buffalo . . . with eyes like the lotus, of godlike aspect and bearing the scimitar and the quiver?" Viswamitra replies that they are the sons of the King of Ayodhya, come to Mithila to inquire after King Janaka's great bow.‡ The bow was at once sent for, and brought in an eight-wheeled carriage drawn by eight hundred men. To the man who could draw this bow the King had promised his most lovely

* Cary, vol. i. p. 259. † *Ibid.*, p. 111.
‡ Cary, vol. i. p. 548. See also Heeren, vol. ii. p. 152.

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daughter, Sita. Rama alone could either lift or bend the weighty weapon, and he with one hand snapped it asunder with a crash like that of a falling mountain.

The lovely Sita was therefore to become the bride of Rama, and his brothers were to marry the three other princesses of Mithila; and as Ayodhya was only a four days' journey distant, the old King Dasaratha came with his councillors to attend the celebration of his sons' nuptials. Rare and costly presents of shawls and silks, deer-skins and precious stones, costly vehicles, were made upon the occasion, and then the whole party returned to Ayodhya, where Dasaratha's wives were eager to embrace the beautiful brides of their sons; and "all these ladies, sumptuously clad in silk, and entertaining each other with agreeable conversation, hastened to the temples of the Gods to offer incense."*

Dasaratha now made preparations for the public acknowledgment of Rama as destined to be the next king in regular succession, and as permitted during his father's lifetime to share with him the honours and fatigues of royalty; but this happiness was all destroyed by the intrigues of Dasaratha's second wife, who was jealous of Rama, and determined that her son Bharata should be the future king. Unfortunately Dasaratha had once given a promise to Bharata's mother that he would grant any two boons she pleased to ask. The promise had been made in years gone by, when he had been dangerously wounded in battle, and carefully attended by this wife, Kaikeyi; and amongst Hindus a promise was irrevocable, and therefore the wretched King felt compelled to yield, although the first boon required was to banish Rama for a period of fourteen years,

* Cary, vol. i. p. 627.

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and the second to declare Bharata the heir-apparent.* No one thinks of remonstrating, and Rama and his lovely wife and his brother depart for the forests; but the exiles were no sooner gone than the aged monarch drooped in sadness. "Six days he sat and mourned, and pined for Rama all that weary time." In the middle of the seventh night a crime, inadvertently committed in his youth, rose up in his mind: he sought sympathy from Kausalya, his first wife, the mother of the banished Rama, and asked her to listen to his tale, for to this he attributed his present affliction. "Every deed," he says, "whether good or evil, brings in time its proper fruit," and men are foolish in cherishing the gay blossoms of the Palasa,† whilst they neglect the fruit-bearing Amra‡ because its flowers are insignificant. King Dasaratha then relates that when his wife was still "unwed, in virgin bloom," and he "in youth's delicious prime," and the first rains of summer were commencing, there came—

"A day of summer rain-time, filling my young soul with love;
The great sun had dried the earth-dews with his hot beams from above,
And in highest heaven turning, journey'd on his southward road,
Racing towards the gloomy region, the Departed's sad abode:
Balmy cool the air was breathing, welcome clouds were floating by,
Humming bees with joyful music swell'd the glad wild peacock's cry;
Their wing-feathers wet with bathing, birds slow flying to the trees,
Rested in the topmost branches, fann'd by the soft summer breeze;
Like the Great Deep, many twinkling, gold-shot, with gay peacock's sheen,

* Hindu Drama, vol. i. p. 281, H. H. Wilson.
† *Butea frondosa.* ‡ Mango.

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Gleaming with the fallen rain-drops, sea-bright all the hills were seen;
Whilst like serpents, winding swiftly, torrents from the mountain-side
Hiss'd along, some bright and flashing, turbid some and ochre-dyed."*

The first showers of May and June were giving a reprieve from the intense heat of the previous months, and with bow in hand the youthful monarch left the city for the woods which skirt Surayu's flood, intending to try his skill as an archer upon the beasts of the forest, who come down to the river to drink in the cool of the evening. Whilst lying in ambush by the river's reedy side, he heard the gurgling sound of a water-cruse being slowly filled: this he mistook for the noise made by an elephant in drinking; it was dark, and eager to secure the game he drew forth a glittering shaft, but scarcely had the arrow flown when he heard the bitter wail of a human voice, exclaiming, "Ah me! ah me!" in dying agony;—

"Writhing on the bank in anguish, with a plaintive voice cried he,
'Ah! wherefore has this arrow smitten a poor harmless devotee?'"

The King's arrow had fatally wounded a youth who had come down to the river to draw water for his parents, who were recluses in the forest, and who is at a loss to imagine why any murderer should seek his life. "Who," he says, "should slay a hermit living upon roots and fruits? Does he want my vesture? Little will he gain from my deerskin mantle and coat of bark." But it is not for his death, he says, that he is pained, but for the destitution in which he will leave his aged parents. Horror seized the King, as in the stilly calm of evening he heard this piteous moan; and

* R. T. Griffith, Specimens of Indian Poetry, p. 11.

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rushing through the reeds and bushes, perceived a young Ascetic lying transfixed by an arrow, his hair dishevelled, his pitcher cast aside, and the life-blood fast ebbing from his wound. The dying youth fixed his eyes upon Dasaratha and recognized him as the King; but still wondering what offence he can have given, he adds:

"'Ah! I am not thine only victim. Cruel King! thy heedless dart
Pierces too a father's bosom, and an aged mother's heart.
They, my parents blind and feeble, from this hand alone can drink,
When I come not, thirsting, hoping, sadly to the grave they 'll sink.'"

Fruitless now, he continues, are his Veda studies, and fruitless his father's ascetic merit; for even were his father present, he would be powerless to save, "as a tree can never rescue from the axe the doomed tree." But although his father was powerless to save, he knew that he was mighty to curse; and the gentle spirit of the sufferer recoiled from the thought that the King, the son of Raghu, would be blasted by that curse. He bids him therefore hasten to deprecate his father's consuming wrath, by being himself the bearer of the evil tidings; but begs first to have the arrow taken from his side, that he may be released from agony. Dasaratha hesitated, and the youth, rightly interpreting his hesitation, assures him that, although withdrawing the shaft will occasion death, he need not fear, for that he is not a Brahman.

"'Let not thy sad heart be troubled for thy sin if I should die;
Lessen'd be thy grief and terror, for no twice-born, King, am I;
Fear not; thou may'st do my bidding, guiltless of a Brahman's death:
Wedded to a Vaisya father, Sudra mother gave me breath.'
Thus he spake, and I down kneeling drew the arrow from his side;
Then the hermit, rich in penance, fix'd his eyes on me, and died."

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The punishment which the Code of Manu awards to the slayer of a Brahman was to be branded in the forehead with the mark of a headless corpse, and entirely banished from society;* this being apparently commutable for a fine. The poem is therefore in accordance with the Code regarding the peculiar guilt of killing Brahmans; but in allowing a hermit who was not a *Dwija* (twice-born) to go to heaven, the poem is far in advance of the Code. The youth in the poem is allowed to read the Veda, and to accumulate merit by his own as well as his father's pious acts; whereas the exclusive Code reserves all such privileges to *Dwijas,* invested with the sacred cord. Many such inconsistencies are met with, showing that the Code never was in universal practice.

The King stood for a time motionless with sorrow; but as soon as he recovered himself he filled the pitcher with water from the stream, and taking the path which had been directed, he soon reached the lowly cottage of the poor old sightless couple, who were sitting like two birds with clipped wings, helpless, with none to guide them. The next scene will admit of no abridgment.

"Sadly, slowly I approach'd them, by my rash deed left forlorn;
Crush'd with terror was my spirit, and my mind with anguish torn;
At the sound of coming footsteps thus I heard the old man say,
'Dear son, bring me water quickly, thou hast been too long away,
Bathing in the stream, or playing, thou hast stay'd so long from home;
Come, thy mother longeth for thee; come in quickly, dear child, come!
Be not angry, mine own darling; keep not in thy memory
Any hard word from thy mother, any hasty speech from me;

* Code, ix. 237.

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Thou art thy poor parents' succour, eyes art thou unto the blind;
Speak! on thee our lives are resting—why so silent and unkind?'
Thus I heard; yet deeper grieving, and in fresh augmented woe,
Spake to the bereavèd father, with words faltering and slow,
'Not thy child, O noble-minded; Dasaratha, Sage! am I,
By a deed of sinful rashness plunged with thee in misery.'"

The unhappy King then tells his tale, and entreats pardon; and the hermit, who can scarcely speak for weeping, tells him that had he concealed this sin its fruits would have fallen upon his head ten thousand-fold, and had it been intentional, the whole race of Raghu would have perished; and before saying more, he begs that they may be conducted to the fatal place, and be enabled once more to fold their darling in their arms. The lamentations uttered by the side of the "death-cold clay" are very touching, especially where the father urges the son, no longer living, to speak to his parents:

"'Come, dear child, embrace thy father, put thy little hand in mine;
Let me hear thee sweetly prattle some fond playful word of thine.
Ah! who 'll read me now the Vedas, filling my old heart with joy?
Who, when evening rites are over, cheer me mourning for my boy?
Who will bring me fruits and water, roots and wild herbs from the wood?
Who supply the helpless hermit, like a cherish'd guest, with food?
Can I tend thine aged mother till her weary life is done?
Can I feed her, soothe her sorrow, longing for her darling son?'"

The father's thoughts then turn to the blissful mansion which his son shall attain in heaven, where he shall be welcome to those who fell nobly in battle, and dwell in Indra's Paradise with good people who loved their Acharyas, or spiritual teachers, and tended the sacred fire, and studied the Veda, and performed penance; but he denounces sorrow on the wretch by whose rash hand he fell. Whilst the

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parents were occupied in sorrow's last duties over the body of their son, he addressed them from a heavenly chariot in the sky, saying that his filial devotion had won for him supreme bliss, and that they must not grieve, but follow to partake his joy. The old hermit is nevertheless quite unable to forgive, and lays his curse upon the humbled King, and says to him—

"'Thy breast shall know
Something of the pangs I suffer—a bereavèd father's woe:
Thus I lay my curse upon thee, for this thing that thou hast done—
As I mourn for my belovèd, thou shalt sorrow for a son.'"

The aged pair then ascended the funeral pile of their son, and there expired. And this youthful folly, Dasaratha says, is the cause of his present distress, it is the fulfilment of the ancient hermit's curse. He bids Kausalya, his affectionate wife, farewell, and sinks in anguish for his banished Rama. He feels his eyes darkened and his memory overcast, and knows that this is the awful summons of the dark messengers of Death. His last words are for Rama, envying those who will see him return in triumph after his exile, and saying, "Ah, Rama! ah, my son!"

This beautiful episode was published in Paris in 1826, with a translation by M. Chezy, and a literal version in Latin by M. Bournouf. There is also a very pleasing translation in verse by the Rev. Dean Milman, but the quotations and abstract above are taken almost wholly from the later translation by Mr. Griffith.

Funeral ceremonies* for King Dasaratha were performed in Ayodhya with very great pomp. The body of the deceased King was wrapped in silk, placed on a bier, and committed to the flames; his wives were not burned with

* Heeren, vol. ii. p. 155.

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him, although a passage occurs in which his favourite wife, Kausalya, is said to entertain the idea and wish to do so; but the practice of widows actually burning themselves on their husbands' funeral pile is believed to belong to a much later period of Hindu history. A great feast and sacrifice was made, at which animals were sacrificed and *flesh* distributed;* and then follows a lively description of the poets, panegyrists, parasites, etc., resident at an Indian Court, and details concerning Court customs and amusements, which were all abandoned out of respect for the deceased Raja. "At other times the town resounded with the noise and bustle of men and women, like the shout of contending armies; the great men ever going to and fro upon chariots, elephants, and prancing steeds." Now the pleasure-gardens were abandoned, the tables for sacrificial offerings empty, the flower-shops closed, and bankers and merchants absent.† The State was without a king; and although the poet is eloquent upon the disasters to which this exposed it, we may doubt whether Brahman poets or Brahman ministers considered in their hearts that this was any great misfortune. At any rate the principal Brahman, Vasishta, assumed the conduct of affairs, and assembled the Council, who agreed that Bharata, the son of the intriguing second wife, Kaikeyi, must be sent for and invited to occupy the vacant throne. Bharata was residing with his maternal grandfather; but although he obeyed the summons and returned immediately to Ayodhya, he refused to accept the insignia of royalty,

* See Col. Sykes, J. R. A. S. No. xii. May, 1841. At page 269 he gives a note referring to the Ramayana, book ii. sec. 61, saying that a cow and calf were sacrificed at Dasaratha's funeral, and ghee, oil, and *flesh* distributed.

† Heeren, vol. ii. p. 267; Ramayana, iii. 98.

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which according to Hindu law was the heritage of his elder brother.* We are not told how his mother behaved when he thus refused to aid her wicked schemes for his advancement; but the Council resolved, that if he would not be king himself, he must go in pursuit of Rama, and persuade him to return and assume the sovereignty. Bharata accordingly set out with a splendid retinue of soldiers and attendants. His ordinary night encampments are not recorded; but in the neighbourhood of Allahabad he met a renowned Sage, bearing the Vedic name of Bharadwaja, who insisted upon making a feast, not only for Bharata himself, but for his entire army. This Sage possessed powers of enchantment, by which he compelled the forest and the rivers to bring contributions of venison, peacocks, partridges, mutton, the flesh of the wild hog, sauces, and potent spirits. The entertainment was served in a magnificent palace produced for the occasion; thousands of beautiful damsels were sent down by the God Brahmá, and celestial music floated in the air, until at the approach of daybreak Bharadwaja dissolved the spell and the whole scene disappeared. This famous dinner of venison and peacocks may be contrasted with the repast given to Viswamitra and his retainers, where the dishes were piled mountains high with honey, sugarcane, and other dainties for licking, chewing, and drinking. The explanation is that Viswamitra and his followers were Brahmans, whilst Bharata was a Kshatriya, accompanied by warriors, to which Caste flesh-meat appears to have been habitual.

Bharata's journey was impeded by the want of roads; but able carpenters and diggers and labourers, with carts, ac-

* Heeren, vol. ii. pp. 155, 156.

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companied him, breaking through rocks, building bridges, digging wells, and even making canals,* and penetrating apparently into unexplored country, crossing the Vindhya Hills in the direction of Indore, and at length discovering Rama, with his brother and his wife Sita, in the forests of the Dekkan.

The meeting between the brothers shows the utmost delicacy and generosity of feeling; Bharata lamenting his mother's ill conduct, and entreating Rama to return; Rama declining, because unless he keep his father's vow he cannot secure his father's happiness in heaven: he therefore adjures his brother to return to Ayodhya and "console the people and the twice-born. I with Sita and Lakshman will enter the forest of Dandaka. Be thou the king of men, I will be sovereign of wild beasts. Let the umbrella shade thy head, I will take refuge in the shade of the woods."† Bharata makes a pathetic remonstrance; but at length Rama embraced him, "sobbing like a staggering duck," and put an end to the discussion by saying, "Though the rising of the cool moon should cease to be pleasing; though Himavat should abandon its snow; . . . I will not relinquish my promise; . . . the sea may overflow its shore, but I will never relinquish my father's engagement." In sign of obedience to Rama's wishes, Bharata then begs him to put on the golden shoes, which he had brought. Rama does so, and returns them to his brother. Bharata then, bowing to the shoes, says, "For fourteen years I will assume the matted hair and the habit of a devotee, and feed on fruits and roots. Waiting thy return, I will reside without the city . . . committing the kingdom to thy shoes." The

* Cary, vol. iii. p. 228. † Cary, vol. iii. p. 429.

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brothers embrace, and Rama's last words are, "Cherish thy mother Kaikeyi, be not angry with her; to this thou art adjured by both me and Sita."*

After Bharata's departure, Rama came accidentally into collision with the rude people of the wild country in which he was located. A woman of their race, unfortunately, made love to him and his brother, and they, as a sign of their displeasure, cut off her nose and her ears;† but the woman had powerful relatives possessed of demoniacal power, and knew how to take vengeance on her foes. Finding other plans fail—for in open warfare Rama always gained the ascendency—she called in aid her power of sorcery, and bewitched her brother Ravana, the demon-king of Lanka (Ceylon), to be in love with Rama's wife, the lovely Sita. Ravana, finding it in vain to hope to succeed without the aid of stratagem, took with him an assistant sorcerer, disguised as a deer; and as Rama took great pleasure in the chase, it was not difficult for the deer to lure him from his cottage in pursuit. He did not leave his beloved Sita without charging Lakshman, his brother, to remain in charge; but the wily deer knew how to defeat his precaution, and when transfixed by Rama's arrow he cried out in the voice of Rama, "Oh, Lakshman, save me!" Sita heard the cry, and entreated Lakshman to fly to his brother's rescue. He was unwilling to go, but yielded to her earnestness, and she was left alone. This being the state of affairs which Ravana desired, he now left his hiding-place and came forward as an Ascetic, in a red threadbare garment, with a single tuft of hair upon his head, and three sticks and a pitcher in his hand. All creation shuddered at his approach; birds,

* Cary, pp. 472, 473. † H. H. Wilson, Hindu Theatre, i. 281.

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beasts, and flowers were motionless with dread; the summer wind ceased to breathe, and a shiver passed over the bright waves of the river. Ravana stood for awhile looking at his victim, as she sat weeping, and musing over the unknown cry; but soon he approached, saying :*

"'O thou that shinest like a tree with summer blossoms overspread,
Wearing that woven *kusa* robe, and lotus garland on thy head!
Why art thou dwelling here alone, here in this dreary forest's shade,
Where range at will all beasts of prey, and demons prowl in every glade?
Wilt thou not leave thy cottage-home, and roam the world which stretches wide,
See the fair cities which men build, and all their gardens and their pride?
Why longer, fair one, dwell'st thou here, feeding on roots and sylvan fare,
When thou might'st dwell in palaces, and earth's most costly jewels wear?
Fearest thou not the forest gloom, which darkens round on every side?
Who art thou, say! and whose and whence, and wherefore dost thou here abide?'
When first these words of Ravana broke upon sorrowing Sita's ear,
She started up, and lost herself in wonderment and doubt and fear;
But soon her gentle loving heart threw off suspicion and surmise,
And slept again in confidence, lull'd by the mendicant's disguise.
'Hail, holy Brahman!' she exclaim'd; and in her guileless purity
She gave a welcome to her guest with courteous hospitality.
Water she brought to wash his feet, and food to satisfy his need,
Full little dreaming in her heart what fearful guest she had received."

She even tells him her whole story, how Rama had won

* Westminster Review, October, 1848, p. 45.

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her for his bride and taken her to his father's home, and how the jealous Kaikeyi had cast them forth to roam the woods; and after dwelling fondly on her husband's praise, she invited her guest to tell his name and lineage, and what had induced him to leave his native land for the wilds of the Dandaka forest, inviting him to await her husband's return, for "to him are holy wanderers dear." Suddenly Ravana declares himself to be the demon-monarch of the earth, "at whose name Heaven's armies flee." He has come, he says, to woo Sita for his queen, and to carry her to his palace in the island of Ceylon. Then burst forth the wrath of Rama's wife:

"' *Me* wouldst thou woo to be thy queen, or dazzle with thine empire's shine?
And didst thou dream that Rama's wife could stoop to such a prayer as thine?
I, who can look on Rama's face, and know that there my husband stands,—
My Rama, whose high chivalry is blazon'd through a hundred lands!
What! shall the jackal think to tempt the lioness to mate with him?
Or did the King of Lanka's isle build upon such an idle dream?' "

Ravana's only answer was to throw off his disguise, and with brows as dark as the storm-cloud in the sky, he carried off the shrieking Sita as an eagle bears a snake, mounting up aloft and flying with his burden through the sky. The unhappy Sita calls loudly upon Rama, and bids the flowery bowers, and trees, and river, all tell her Rama that Ravana has stolen his Sita from his home. Here our attention is again called to the beauty of a river running between groves of trees. On the former occasion, the Surayu river (or the Gogra), on which Ayodhya stands, was frequented

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by water-fowl, who dipped their wings into its cooling flood and then flew to the topmost branches of the trees to catch the faintest movement of the breeze, whilst the soothing hum of bees tempered the glad cry of the gay peacock. The river which the unhappy Sita loved was a tributary to the Godavery, running through the dense forests and wild districts not yet entirely explored, which lie to the north of Bombay and stretch away towards Orissa. The plash of the water-fowl bathing in the bright waters of the Godavery is the most cheerful feature of the scene; but, unlike the Gogra, it is skirted by no "sea-bright hills" with flashing torrents, but hemmed in by the weary woods of "the pathless Dandaka,"* where twining creeper-plants hanging and climbing from bough to bough, and the rich blossoms of the lofty trees, alone relieve the forest gloom.† This is the district at present inhabited by Khonds and Koles, of whose human sacrifices and other uncivilized practices Captain Macpherson has published full particulars.‡ In Rama's time the woods were not haunted by Gonds, Khonds, and Koles, but by demons and monkeys; and as he did not feel strong enough to recover Sita single-handed, he entered

* This country appears to be still "the pathless Dandaka;" for a "Friend of India" writes in the 'Times' newspaper (Thursday, October 27, 1853), "If one-half the money that has been expended in endeavouring to improve the quality of the cotton of India had been invested in improving the navigation of the Godavery," slave-labour would become a drug in America. And Colonel Cotton states, "There seems no reason why the Godavery may not become the line of a trade of a million tons a year, when once the pent-up treasures of its basin effect a breach in the barriers which have hitherto shut it up. . . . Wheat might be manufactured into flour by the abundant water-power of the Godavery, and conveyed to England by hundreds of thousands of tons."

† Westminster Review, Oct. 1848, pp. 47, 48.

‡ J.R.A.S. vol. xiii. p. 216; and also the same Journal for May, 1842.

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into alliance with the monkeys. First, the monkey-king Sugriva despatched emissaries in all directions to ascertain where Sita was concealed; and when the monkey-general Hanuman ascertained that she was in a palace in Ceylon, Rama and all the allied forces marched down to the Coromandel coast, and making a bridge by casting rocks into the sea passed quickly into Lanka.* Vestiges of Rama's bridge may still be seen, occasioning much inconvenience to navigators, who are obliged to lighten heavy-burdened vessels before they can pass the rocks and sandbanks of the Straits of Manaar. After fighting a few battles, the Rakshasas (demons) were defeated, Ravana put to death by Rama, and Sita rescued from her palace-prison. Rama will however have nothing to say to his recovered wife until she shall have gone through the ordeal of fire: but as she passed through the blazing pile unhurt,† and Brahma and other Gods attested her fidelity, her husband once more received her with affection; and the term of exile over, the whole party returned in happiness to Ayodhya.

This story evidently refers to a real expedition through the Peninsula of India, and to real victories in the South; but the Hindus did not then retain conquests or make settlements in Ceylon, for at a subsequent period, about B.C. 546, the island was still, in poetic phrase, inhabited by demons, whom the Hindu Vijaya then conquered. Rama's expedition left more permanent traces amongst the "Malabars" of the neighbouring coast, where the name of Rama's

* Hindu Drama, vol. i. p. 283.

† When witnesses cannot be obtained, the Code of Manu directs the judge to cause the party accused to "hold fire, or to dive under water. He whom the blazing fire burns not, whom the water soon forces not up . . . must be held veracious."—Code, ch. viii. 114, 115.

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ancestor, Ikshwaku, or Okkaaku, is still borne by ancient families.*

No certain date can be assigned to the Epic Poems, and from their length and mode of structure they may well be supposed to stretch across many centuries. The legends and facts upon which they are founded belong to the earliest periods disclosed by Sanskrit literature, but these are given with a colouring from the arts, customs, and mythologies prevailing one or two centuries before our era. We may therefore consider the Epics as affording sure types of the earliest national character, but not of the earliest national customs of ancient Brahmanical India. The reputed author of the Ramayana is Valmiki; its style and language are those of an early heroic age; and there are signs of its having been popular in India at least three centuries B.C. Recognition of the beauty of natural scenery, and readiness to attribute earthly phenomena to Divine influence, are amongst the charms of this beautiful poem. It gives free expression to the thoughts of all hearts, and adds superstitions peculiar to itself, and much probably that is wrong in every way; but genuine love for nature and genuine human affection is not suppressed, and never is counterfeit affectation substituted for hearty human emotion. The original subject of the poem is sometimes considered as mythological, and sometimes as heroic: but the mythological portions stand apart and have the air of an afterthought, intended to give a religious and philosophical tone to what was at first a tale rehearsed at festivals in praise of the ancestors of kings.

The mythological introduction states that Lanka, or

* Turnour, Epitome of Ceylon History.

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Ceylon, had fallen under the dominion of a prince named Ravana, who was a demon of such power that by dint of penance he had extorted from the God Brahmá a promise that no mortal should destroy him. Such a promise was as relentless as the Greek Fates, from which Jove himself could not escape;* and Ravana, now invulnerable to man, gave up asceticism and tyrannized over the whole of southern India in a fearful manner. At length even the Gods in heaven were distressed at the destruction of holiness and oppression of virtue consequent upon Ravana's tyrannies; and they called a council in the mansion of Brahmá, to consider how the earth could be relieved from such a fiend. To this council came the "God Vishnu, riding on the eagle Vainataya, like the sun on a cloud, and his discus and his mace in hand." The other Gods entreat him to give his aid, and he promises in consequence to be born on earth, and to accomplish the destruction of the terrific Ravana. A superhuman Rishi is then found to perform a sacrifice for the King of Ayodhya, which is followed by his becoming the father of Rama and his three brothers; all his four sons being incarnations of Vishnu after a fashion, but Rama was Vishnu himself in mortal form. The same kind of tone is given to the visit the youths made to Viswamitra's hermitage; instead of their going for the ordinary purpose of learning accomplishments from learned Brahmans, it is the Brahmans who require the assistance of the divine Rama to defeat the evil spirits. The next feat was bending the great bow, which it was easy to exaggerate into a bow requiring eight hundred men to drag along: and after this Rama conducts himself very much like other mortals, until

* Westminster Review, Oct. 1848, p. 41.

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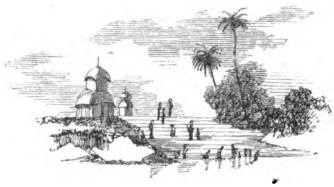
his term of banishment expired, when he and his wife and brother having rapidly returned to Ayodhya, and Bharata having willingly resigned the government in his favour, he declares that the object of his being born is accomplished; and instead of reigning on earth, he and all his company return to heaven, his real abode.



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CHAPTER V.

THE MAHABHARATA.

"The verse adorn again:
Fierce War and faithful Love,
And Truth severe, by fairy fiction drest,
In buskin'd measures move;
Pale Grief and pleasing Pain,
With Horror, tyrant of the throbbing breast."—GRAY.

THE Mahabharata is the second great Sanskrit epic, and is a work containing so many episodes, referable to various periods, that it has, with some reason, been designated a Cycle of Poems. The wars of the two rival families, known as the Pandus and the Kurus, constitute the main subject, and this portion Akbar the Great thought worthy of translation into Persian; but the appearance of the Gods upon earth, their consultations in heaven, and the episodes, are all omitted in the Persian copy.*

The Pandus and the Kurus were descendants of a king named Bharata, much respected, but apparently quite distinct from him whom we left to reign at Ayodhya. In the Mahabharata the scene of government is Hastinapura, to the north of Delhi; and for this ancestral inheritance we

* Heeren, vol. ii. p. 159; Ayin Akbari, ii. 100 *sqq.*

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find the rival families contending. The right of the Pandus to priority would have been unquestioned, but that their father was a leper, and before his death obliged to resign in favour of his brother; and the sons of this brother (the Kurus) grow up in consequence ambitious of securing the kingdom to themselves, and jealous of their orphan cousins (the Pandus). There were five young Pandus, and a hundred young Kurus, all residing at Hastinapura; and having arrived at an age when the King, the Pandus' uncle and the Kurus' father,—

> "Deem'd the time arrived
> When the brave scions of each royal house
> Of Kuru and of Pandu should improve
> Their growing years in exercise of arms;
> With sage deliberation long he scann'd
> A suitable preceptor for their youth,
> Who to meet skill in war and arms should join
> Intelligence and learning, lofty aims,
> Religious earnestness, and love of truth."*

And then we are introduced to a Brahman named Drona, who occupies a prominent place throughout the story. Drona was no ascetic philosopher; and having in childhood shared the lessons and sports of the royal heir of the neighbouring kingdom of Panchala,† he felt inclined to live again at that Court, now that his old playfellow had become king. Never doubting of a hearty welcome, he presented himsef to Draupada quite unceremoniously, merely saying, "Behold in me your friend!" His reception was however totally different from what he anticipated:

* Professor Wilson, Oriental Magazine, vol. iii. p. 134.

† Panchala was between Delhi and the Punjab, and apparently descended as low as Ajmere.—H. H. W., Or. Mag. vol. ii. p. 231.

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"The monarch sternly view'd
The Sage, and bent his brows, and with disdain
His eyeballs redden'd; silent awhile he sat,
Then arrogantly spoke: 'Brahman! methinks
Thou showest little wisdom, or the sense
Of what is fitting, when thou call'st me friend.
What friendship, weak of judgment, can subsist
Between a luckless pauper and a king?'"

The King of Panchala starts at the idea of friendship between a learned Brahman and one to whom the Vedas are a mystery, or between a warrior and one who cannot guide a chariot through the ranks of war, and continues:

"He to whose high mandate nations bow
Disdains to stoop to friends beneath the throne;
Hence, then, with idle dreams! dismiss the memory
Of other days and thoughts: I know thee not!"

Drona was too much astonished to speak, but he instantly withdrew from Panchala to Hastinapura, where he was most reverentially welcomed, and at once entrusted with the instruction of the five young Pandu and the hundred young Kuru princes.

The King of Panchala in the meantime was in terror to think of the awful calamities to which he had exposed himself by his contumacious conduct to a Brahman, and his first anxiety was to secure a son for his protection. He resorted to the usual Hindu plan of performing an expensive sacrifice, aided and guided by powerful Brahmans, and became in consequence the parent of one son and one daughter. Of the son very little is related, but the daughter becomes the heroine of the poem. She is of dark complexion, but of exceeding loveliness; and the only wish we have for her is, that we could change her name Draupadi, for it is al-

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most beyond the power of art to invest a heroine having so uncouth an appellation with the poetic charm belonging to her in the Sanskrit. For the present, leaving Draupadi to grow in loveliness at Panchala, we must return to Drona and his numerous pupils at Hastinapura.

Drona had in youth been equally instructed in wisdom and in arms, and he taught the young princes "to rein the steed, to guide the elephant, to drive the chariot, launch the javelin, hurl the dart, wield the battle-axe, and whirl the mace." The Pandu or Pandava princes are the favourites of the poets, and are always represented as both more amiable and more heroic than their cousins the Kurus. Yudhishthira, the eldest Pandu, is a calm, inflexible person, who leads and supports his younger brothers; Bhima, the second, is remarkable for strength; and Arjuna, the third, is full of enthusiasm and affection, excelling in every martial exercise, and winning all hearts. Even in the boyish sports of their childhood it was always Arjuna that won the prize; nor less conspicuous were his peaceful virtues—

> "Submissive ever to his teacher's will;
> Contented, modest, affable, and mild."

Drona already prophesied that he would be an unequalled archer amongst the sons of men.*

When these youthful princes had all become expert in the use of arms, their great preceptor proposed to the King that a public trial of their skill should take place. A level plain was consequently chosen, on which the pious Drona reared an altar for an offering to the Gods, and a tall pavilion, in which rich seats were prepared for the King and his Queens, the courtiers and the court ladies. The archery is described

* Professor Wilson, Oriental Magazine, vol. iii. p. 138.

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with great animation, and from this and other passages we learn, in Professor Wilson's words, "that the Hindus cultivated archery most assiduously, and were very Parthians in the use of the bow on horseback." The spectators were perfectly dazzled by the fearful shower of arrows which the archers let fly, sometimes whilst standing on the ground, sometimes whilst "on generous steeds in rapid circles borne." At the close of the combat Drona called for Arjuna, who modestly came forward in his radiant armour "as glorious as a cloud at set of sun," whilst the gazing crowd uprose and greeted him with "the clang of shells and trumpets, and loud shouts of admiration." The favourite hero, being thus as it were *encored*, made further exhibitions of his skill; he leapt from his chariot and vaulted into it again whilst it was whirling along at full speed. He also shot five arrows at once from his chariot into the jaws of a wild boar. A pause then ensued, during which the opposing parties sought repose; but suddenly "a clamour rending heaven" was heard behind the barrier, and Kerna, a new combatant, was announced. His ears shone with gorgeous pendants, and with bow in hand he advanced proudly like a moving mountain. This new hero was anxious to enter the lists with Arjuna, and offered to perform every feat which Arjuna had achieved; but, unknown to themselves, Kerna and Arjuna were brothers; and their mother, who was amongst the spectators, in agony at seeing them "on hostile thoughts intent," strove to prevent "the horrid strife;" but she fainted, and the combat would have commenced had not another difficulty occurred. It was necessary, according to Hindu laws of chivalry, that each warrior should declare his name and lineage; but

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Kerna, having been brought up by a charioteer in ignorance of his real parents, could say nothing: he hung his head, "as when surcharged with dew the blooming lotus bows its fragrant blossom." And on this occurrence the sports were suddenly concluded.*

The jealousy and hatred of the Kurus towards the Pandus only increased as they grew to manhood; and at no long period after the trial of arms, the Kurus caused the house inhabited by the five Pandus to be set on fire. The Pandus escaped, but a woman of low caste and her five sons having been accidentally in the house and involved in the flames, the discovery of their bodies led to a general belief that the five Pandus and their mother had perished. In the meantime the brothers wandered in the woods, lived on game, dressed themselves in the skins of the animals they shot, and met with a variety of adventures, never entering courts or capitals, until news reached them that Draupadi, the daughter of Draupada the King of Panchala, was about to hold a Swayambara,—which means, that her father was inviting company to his Court, amongst whom she was to choose her future husband. Draupada still dreaded that Drona would one day resent the insult which he had offered, and he exceedingly wished to strengthen himself against this formidable foe, by procuring an alliance with the Pandus; but as the Pandus were missing, and he knew not how to find them, his only plan was to give a public entertainment and take his chance of their attending. Fortunately the five brothers were no longer in the woods, but on the road leading to Panchala; inquiring of some Brahmans the cause of the unusual throngs of people, they learned that "princes

* Oriental Magazine, vol. iii. p. 140.

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with throbbing hearts" were hastening to attend Draupadi's Swayambara, and were recommended to go also and share in the gifts distributed; or, continued the Brahmans,—

> "To behold, if so your youth prefer,
> The joyous revelry that gilds the scene;
> For thither mummers, mimes, and gleemen throng,
> Athletes, who the prize of strength or skill
> Contend in wrestling or the gauntlet's strife;
> Minstrels with sounding lutes, and bards who chant
> Their lords' high lineage and heroic deeds."*

The brothers accepted the proposal, and accompanied the band of Brahmans, travelling through smiling groves and by the margin of limpid lakes, and often loitering to mark the beauties of each grateful scene. When they arrived at Panchala they took up their abode under the lowly roof of a potter, and went out daily as mendicants to gather alms.

The King of Panchala, in his anxiety to have a Pandu prince for his son-in-law, caused a ponderous bow to be framed with magic skill, requiring such strength as he believed a Pandu alone possessed, and for a mark he hung a metal plate which revolved upon an axle; and then made proclamation that he who could hit with an arrow the centre of the plate should win the princess. The site chosen was outside the city, and was enclosed by a deep ditch and lofty walls. Glittering pavilions were erected for illustrious spectators, and the crowd who pressed without the barriers found places upon scaffolds and lofty housetops. All the hundred sons of the King of Hastinapura, and Kerna, and innumerable other chiefs, attended as candidates, whilst kings sat around the throne of Draupada, on lofty seats emblazoned with gems and gold. Then the trumpets brayed,

* Oriental Magazine, vol. iv. p. 142.

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and the entertainments commenced with games of skill, music, dancing, and displays of the dramatic art: thus sixteen days were passed; and then, as every chief of note was present except the Pandus, who were unknown in their disguise, Draupada felt that he had no longer any fair plea for further delaying his daughter's choice. So the lovely Draupadi was brought into the arena, ready to throw her garland upon the successful candidate.

"Then came the Princess forth, in royal garb
Array'd, and costly ornaments adorn'd;
A garland interwove with gems and gold
Her delicate hands sustain'd; from the pure bath
With heighten'd loveliness she tardy came,
And blushing in the princely presence stood.
Next in the ring the reverend priest appear'd,
And strew'd the holy grass, and pour'd the oil,
An offering to the God of Fire, with prayer
Appropriate."*

And now the competitors came forward, and each endeavoured to bend the bow, but all in vain. Some made such violent efforts that they fell back on the ground, exciting peals of laughter from the spectators; others freed themselves from their royal robes and diamond chains and diadems, and unfettered put forth their strength; but it was in vain, and the bow defied them all, until Kerna came, and he "the yielding bowstring drew and ponderous shafts applied," and drew forth shouts of acclamations from the multitude. But the unfortunate Kerna, being the reputed son of a charioteer, was no fitting match for the Princess of Panchala. Kerna's real father was the Sun; but this fact was unknown, and availed him nothing:

* Oriental Magazine, vol. iv. p. 143.

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"The timid Draupadi in terror cried,
'I wed not with the base-born!' Kerna smiled
In bitterness, and upwards turn'd his eyes
To his great sire the Sun; then cast to earth
The bow and shafts, and sternly stalk'd away."

Amazement spread through the crowd at finding all the noble suitors foiled, but just at this moment Arjuna advanced. The Brahmans thought him a student of their tribe, and tried to hold him back from certain failure, but in vain; and some who observed his strength, like that of an elephant, and his lion port and his self-collected soul, had hopes of his success.

"Unheeding praise or censure, Arjuna*
Pass'd to the field: with reverential steps
He round the weapon circled,† next address'd
A silent prayer to Mahadeo, and last
With faith inflexible on Krishna dwelt.
One hand the bow upbore, the other drew
The sturdy cord, and placed the pointed shafts:
They flew—the mark was hit—and sudden shouts
Burst from the crowd long silent; fluttering waved
The Brahman scarfs, and drum and trumpet bray'd,
And bard and herald sang the hero's triumph."

The King and his daughter liked the appearance of the disguised Arjuna, and were very well contented at his success, but the rage of the princely suitors knew no bounds; "Behold," they cried, "the King regards us no more than straws, and deigns to wed his daughter to a Brahman boy whose craft has humbled royalty." And the lightest pu-

* Oriental Magazine, vol. iv. p. 146.

† Walking round an object of veneration is an act of worship amongst Hindus: it is not unknown to Virgil as a purificatory rite, and is frequently practised in Roman Catholic countries.—See note, H. H. Wilson, Or. Mag. vol. iv. p. 147.

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nishment they can assign for such an offence is to kill the King of Panchala and all his race, and to throw the damsel herself into the flames, unless she prefer choosing a royal lord. Their gleaming swords were brandished, and Draupada turned in terror to the Brahmans. Arjuna rushed to his side; Bhima tore up a tree and stood ready for the fight; and for awhile the kings and warriors were so amazed at this novel daring of the priestly tribe that they stood still, admiring; but soon—

> "Like elephants,
> With passion maddening, headlong on they rush'd;
> Like elephants the brothers met their might."

And now Kerna and Arjuna really met in fight; but when Kerna felt the power of his youthful adversary, he was astonished, and paused to express his wonder and admiration. "No Brahman," he says, "could have displayed such skill in arms; nor breathes the man who could my strength defy, save Arjuna." Arjuna does not however declare himself, and the kings are compelled to retire, believing themselves conquered by a set of Brahmans, from whose bands shouts of triumph fill the air, whilst the trembling hand of Draupadi now ventures to fling the marriage chaplet around the neck of Arjuna.

The Pandus then make themselves known; a portion of their hereditary kingdom is given up to them, and for a period they appear to have enjoyed peace and prosperity. Yudhishthira, the eldest Pandu, exercised the sovereignty, and built for himself a beautiful city called Indraprastha, on the site of the modern Delhi, which rivalled the old capital in splendour; and nothing need have been wanting for Pandu happiness if in the pride of his heart Yudhishthira

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had not determined to celebrate the Rájasúya sacrifice which was an assumption of paramount authority, and of course excited jealousy and opposition amongst the contemporary kings of India.* In preparation for the grand ceremony, Yudhishthira sent his brothers in all directions to compel the different princes to acknowledge his pretensions and pay tribute; and the details of these expeditions furnish much curious information concerning the geographical and political divisions of India, at a period a little anterior to that at which Herodotus wrote very similar accounts. When the brothers returned successful, the Kurus professed their acquiescence; and Krishna, the great friend and ally of the Pandus, promised his warm and hearty concurrence, and the ministers and priests made active preparations, and invited guests from every quarter. The ceremony is described with much minuteness; the *abhisheka*, sprinkling from a sacred stream, being the essential part of it. Kings bring a variety of rich tribute, and even perform menial service upon the occasion. But whilst outwardly rendering the required homage, the jealous Kurus were secretly plotting to destroy their rivals, which they contrived by engaging the newly inaugurated King in a desperate game at draughts.† Yudhishthira seems to have been afflicted with a most unfortunate love of gambling, and was led on from stake to stake until he pledged his kingdom; and losing this

* H. H. Wilson, Notes on the Sabha Purva of the Mahabharata.—J. R. S. A., No. xiii.

† The Index prefixed to the Persian translation notes these events as follows:—"Yudishter sends his brothers into all parts to make conquests. The Kurus arrange a sacrificial feast in order to play at draughts. Preparations for the same. The Pandus, having lost at play, retire into the desert, where they continue twelve years."—Heeren, vol. ii. p. 160, *note*.

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last desperate venture he was forced to agree that he and his brothers would resign the kingdom for twelve years, and spend that time in exile. Several beautiful episodes are introduced during this period of exile, and to some of these we shall refer hereafter; at present we must follow the story of the Pandu brothers, who when the twelve years had elapsed returned to Delhi, and demanded the restoration of their sovereignty. The Kuru monarch answered them with scorn, saying, they should not have so much of the soil as the point of a needle could cover, and war was the only alternative. The Pandus then made a gathering of the friends amongst whom they had spent their exile; and the Kurus also summoning their allies, there was no chief of note between the Himalaya and the ocean but was ranged on one side or the other. Drona was still the implacable enemy of the King of Panchala, with whom the Pandus had become allied by marriage; and although attached to Arjuna and his brothers when boys, this did not prevent him from acting zealously as commander-in-chief of the Kuru forces. Yudhishthira appears himself to have had the chief command over the Pandus; and Krishna, the never-failing friend of the Pandu brothers, took his place by the side of Arjuna as his charioteer, whilst at the request of Yudhishthira the ape-emblazoned banner was raised in the van of the troops.* As the hosts on either side advanced, "a sudden tumult filled the sky, . . . sands upcurled to heaven

* Oriental Magazine, vol. ii. p. 250, *note*. Arjuna's bannerb ore a figure of the monkey-general Hanuman. Having solicited the aid of this Demigod in battle, he had received permission to mount the monkey's figure on his banner, with the assurance that it would be accompanied by his protection. This is one of the few references in the Mahabharata to the earlier poem of the Ramayana.

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and spread a veil before the sun, . . . shrill-screaming kites and vultures winged the darkling air, . . . angry lightnings flashed across the gloom, or blazing meteors fearful shot to earth." But all "regardless of these signs, the chiefs pressed on to mutual slaughter." Twice, "like clouds scattered before the gale," were the Pandus driven back by Drona, who appeared ever in the front, in a car by art immortal framed, although his place as Commander-in-chief was "in the rear to march secure;" whilst the gallant Kerna "led his faithful bands." But Drona was impetuous; "terror hovered over" his course, and the sanguinary plain was strewn with broken cars and elephants and steeds. Then Yudhishthira "called upon his brother Arjuna to lead his choicest squadrons to restore the day;" Arjuna obeyed, and the enemy was checked: but Drona became furious, and forgetting his years, the arrows of the veteran chief flew about with such unerring aim that the soil was sodden "with the crimson stain of the men, steeds, and elephants whom Drona's shafts to Yama's halls consigned."* Yudhishthira was dismayed; but the noble Arjuna soothed his terror, and plighted his faith to brave the arm of Drona. Many single combats are described, in one of which the brave *son* of Arjuna was distinguished; and in another, Bhima and the King of Madra† rushed at each other like two butting elephants. But Drona was still bent upon a personal victory over Yudhishthira, and, driving his chariot full upon him, struck his bow from his hand; but Arjuna stood fearless by, until the arrows flew so thick that heaven was hid and earth was darkened:—

* Oriental Magazine, vol. iv. p. 251.

† A country about Ghuzni, or Ghor, the site of the ancient Mardi.—Or. Mag. vol. ii. p. 254, *note*.

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"Precursor of nocturnal shades; for now
The sun behind the western mountains sank
And gloom profound ensued; nor friend nor foe
Could longer be distinguish'd. Drona then
Commanded conflict cease, and Arjuna
Restrain'd his now re-animated troops:
Each to their tents withdrew."

This fearful battle raged for eighteen days, when, the chiefs of the Kuru party being killed, victory was declared to be in favour of the Pandus; and it became the duty of Yudhishthira to march into Hastinapura and perform funeral ceremonies for the King Duryodhana, his enemy and relative. The chivalrous tone of feeling which pervades this poem, and the similarity of some of the practices described to those of Europe in the Middle Ages, has not escaped observation.* The character of Kerna is one which seems especially to belong to days of chivalry; feeling the degradation of doubtful parentage, he indulges in no mean or cowardly ill-will, but meets mortifications with generous self-devotion and heroism. Several touching episodes relate to him; in one of which we are told, that on the eve of one of these last battles the mother of the Pandus went to him, and disclosing that he also was her son, born previous to her marriage with Pandu, she implored him to leave Duryodhana, the Kuru chief, and join his brothers in their rightful cause. But Kerna had already vowed fidelity to their opponents; and although he knew by prophecies and omens that they would perish, he firmly and sorrowfully abided by his plighted troth.†

A battle which lasted eighteen days may well be supposed

* Oriental Magazine, vol. iii. p. 134.

† Westminster Review, October, 1848, p. 53.

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to have made dreadful havoc both with friends and foes; and the victorious Yudhishthira is represented as feeling unmixed sorrow and disgust. As soon therefore as the funeral obsequies were concluded, he installed younger members of the family upon the thrones of Hastinapura and Indraprastha, and determined with his brothers to set forth on a long gloomy journey to Mount Meru, to seek in Indra's heaven that rest which seemed denied to them on earth. Mr. Marshman thinks that they retired with their relative Krishna to Dwaraka, in Guzerat; and that Krishna being soon after put to death by the Bheels, they resolved to leave India, and passed through Scinde to the Himalaya mountains.* The view given by the poet is more ideal, but quite consistent with Brahmanical philosophy.

"Having heard† Yudhishthira's resolve, and seen the destruction of Krishna,
The five brothers set forth, and Draupadi; and the seventh was a dog that followed them.
Yudhishthira himself was the last that quitted Hastinapura;
And all the citizens and the court followed them on their way,
But none felt able to say unto him 'Return;'
And at length they all went back into the city.
Then the high-souled sons of Pandu and far-famed Draupadi
Pursued their way, fasting, and with their faces turned towards the east,
Resolved upon separation from earth, and longing for release from its laws;
They roamed onward over many regions, and to many a river and sea.
Yudhishthira went before, and Bhima followed next behind him,
And Arjuna came after him, and then the twin sons of Madri,
And sixth after them came Draupadi, with her fair face and lotus eyes,

* Hist. India, p. 29. † Westminster Review, Oct. 1848, p. 57.

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And last of all followed the dog, as they wandered on till they came to the ocean. . . .
And as they journeyed onwards and came unto the west,
There they beheld the old city of Krishna, now washed over by the ocean-tide.
Again they turned to the north, and still they went on in their way,
Circumambulating round the continent to find separation from earth;
Then, with their senses subdued, the heroes, having reached the north,
Beheld with their heaven-desiring eyes the lofty mountain Himavat,
And having crossed its height, they beheld the sea of sand;
And next they saw rocky Meru, the king of mountains.
And while they were thus faring onwards, in eager search for separation,
Draupadi lost hold of her hope, and fell on the face of the earth."

Bhima inquires of Yudhishthira why she fell, who had done no act of evil: he replies, "Too great was her love for Arjuna;" and thus speaking, he went onwards, not looking back, gathering up his soul into himself in his unstooping wisdom and justice. Next the fair Sahadeva fell upon the face of the earth; and when Nakula saw the fall of Draupadi and his brother, he, full of love for his kindred, fell down in his grief like them to earth. Still Yudhishthira, the stern God of Justice, went on; but when Arjuna beheld so many fallen behind, he too, the great conqueror, fell, his soul pierced through with sorrow; and lastly Bhima fell; but still the mighty King went on, nor looked behind, and now none followed but the dog, when

"Suddenly* with a sound which ran through heaven and earth,
Indra came riding on his chariot, and he cried to the King, 'Ascend!'
Then indeed did the lord of justice look back to his fallen brothers,

* Westminster Review, October, 1848, p. 60.

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And thus unto Indra he spoke with a sorrowful heart:
'Let my brothers, who yonder lie fallen, go with me;
Not even into thy heaven would I enter if they were not there;
And yon fair-faced daughter of a king, Draupadi, the all-deserving,
Let her too enter with us! O Indra, approve my prayer!'"

Indra says that he will find his brothers and Draupadi there before him, they having first thrown aside their mortal vestment, whilst Yudhishthira alone is permitted to enter in his body of flesh. The King next begs that the dog may be allowed to go with him, but Indra says he must be contented with having obtained his fellowship and a place in his heaven, and give up the dog; and Yudhishthira being still unwilling to "abandon the faithful," Indra says more decidedly, "My heaven hath no place for dogs: they steal our offerings on earth." But nothing that Indra urges alters Yudhishthira's determination; "Never," he says, "will I abandon yon poor creature, which in fear and distress hath trusted in my power to save." Indra says he has forsaken his brothers, why not then forsake the dog? to which subterfuge Yudhishthira replies with dignity:—

"Mortals, when they are dead, are dead to love or hate; . . .
I could not bring them back to life, but while they lived I never left them.
To oppress the suppliant, to kill a wife, to spoil a Brahman, to betray one's friends,
These are the four great crimes; and to forsake a dependant I count equal to them."

This dog* was Yama, king of death, in disguise; and praising Yudhishthira, he now relieved him from his difficulty by showing himself in his real character. But there was still another trial to be encountered; for upon entering

* Ward's Hindus, vol. ii. p. 448.

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Indra's heaven Yudhishthira beheld his cousins the Kurus, but looked in vain for his brothers: he at once refused to remain without them, and a messenger was sent with him to the Indian hell. Here he proudly resolves to share their sorrows rather than live in heaven without them. But the whole scene was a mere illusion to prove his virtue, and the hell is quickly changed into heaven, where the brothers are left with Indra enjoying boundless bliss. And thus a tale of feud and bloodshed is closed by a melodious strain of Brahmanical philosophy.

In comparing the Mahabharata with the earlier epic, the Ramayana, we find the same freedom of character and expression; courage, generosity, and devoted affection are appreciated; faults and vices meet their natural consequences; and we are not disgusted by seeing characters screwed up or pressed down, according to some artificial standard, after a fashion exhibited by certain later Indian literature. The general customs prevailing in either poem are also similar. Brahmans instruct princes in the arts of war as well as peace; youthful heroes win their brides by feats of strength, and injuries or affronts to holy men are punished by death or loss of kingdom. But a difference is also noticeable between the poems. The Ramayana is a tale of the Solar races, the Mahabharata of the Lunar races; and we are inclined to believe that Brahmanical dominion was far more powerful with the Solar kings at Ayodhya than it ever became with Lunar dynasties. In the Ramayana, Solar kings reign in the orderly manner prescribed by the Code; Brahmans guiding political councils, and Kings commanding armies. But in the Mahabharata, on the other hand, the Lunar tribes at Hastinapura and Dwaraka carry

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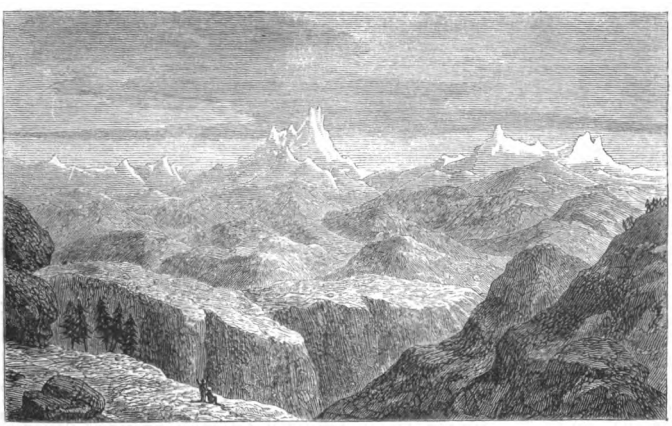
on war at the pleasure of the kings and people with little or no reference to Brahmans. We seem in this second poem to have, in a measure, lost the Brahmanical civilization previously attained, and to be thrown back upon the Vedic period, when priests were warriors and warriors priests, and when cows and horses were actually, not typically, killed and eaten in their sacrifices. The marriage of the heroine, Draupadi, to the five Pandu brothers, is a sign of yet ruder manners adopted from the Scythic tribes of India, and is a circumstance odious to Brahmanical commentators, and quite uncountenanced by Brahmanical institutions.



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CHAPTER VI.

"For a' that, and a' that,
Our toil's obscure, and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that."—BURNS.

HAVING now disposed of the Brahmans and the Kshatriyas, our next inquiry must be into the laws which the Brahmans endeavoured to impose upon the rest of the community. All punishment is supposed to be adjudged by the King:—

"Let the King prepare a just compensation for the good, and a just punishment for the bad: the rule of strict justice let him never transgress."

"If the King were not, without indolence, to punish the guilty, the stronger would roast the weaker like fish upon the spit. . . .

"The crow would peck the consecrated offering of rice; the dog would lick the clarified butter; ownership would remain to none, the lowest would overset the highest."

"A king, desirous of inspecting judicial proceedings, must enter his court of justice composed and sedate in his demeanour, together with *Brahmans* and counsellors who know how to give him advice."*

The dignity and weight which the Code attaches to justice are worthy of the high tone of its philosophy.

* Code of Manu, ch. vii.

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"When justice, having been wounded by iniquity, approaches the court, and the judges extract not the dart, they also shall be wounded by it."

"The only firm friend who follows even after death is justice, all others are extinct with the body."*

The King, or his judge, is to enter on the trial of causes "properly clothed," "his mind attentively fixed;" and he is then directed to see through the thoughts of men by external signs, by their voice, colour, countenance, limbs, signs, and actions; for from "the gesticulations, the speech, the changes of the eye and the face, are discovered the internal workings of the mind."

"As a hunter traces the lair of a wounded beast by the drops of blood, thus let a king investigate the true point of justice by deliberative arguments.

"Let him fully consider the nature of truth, the state of the case, and his own person; . . . the witnesses, the place, the mode, the time."†

So far the Code appears to speak in earnest; but when we pass on to an enumeration and description of the punishments decreed, the tone entirely changes. A witness who does not give true evidence must go "naked and shorn, tormented with hunger and thirst, and deprived of sight," to beg his food at his enemy's door. Whilst a witness, who gives an imperfect account of a transaction, is compared to a man "who eats fish with eagerness and swallows the sharp bones." Many of the punishments might indeed better be attributed to a court-buffoon than to a sedate judge, as—If a once-born man insult a twice-born, he shall have his tongue slit. If a once-born man offer instruction to a priest, hot oil shall be poured into his mouth. If a man steal

* Code, ch. viii. † *Ibid.*, ch. viii.

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gold from a Brahman, he shall have sore fingers; if he steal dressed grain, dyspepsia; if he steal holy words, or is an unauthorized reader of the Vedas, dumbness; if he steal a lamp, blindness; if a horse, lameness; and this is followed by the reflection that—

"Thus according to the diversity of actions are born men despised by the good; stupid, dumb, blind, deaf, deformed."*

The punishments awarded to murder are not less fanciful, but graduated according to the rank of the sufferer. If the person killed be a Kshatriya, the penance is a fourth,—if a Vaisya, an eighth,—if a Sudra, a sixteenth part of that which is ordained for the murder of a Brahman. But if a Brahman kill a Sudra, he only pays the fine awarded for killing a cat, dog, lizard, or crow.†

In a similar strain are the punishments referring to a future life, as—"If a man steal grain in the husk, he shall be born a rat; if a mixed yellow metal, a gander; . . . if exquisite perfumes, a musk-rat; if potherbs, a peacock; if raw grain, a hedgehog." This jesting character never could have obtained in a code of daily use, and may be viewed as strong evidence that Brahmanical arrogance assumed more than it performed, and did not positively crush the general population.

The Code reserves banking, agriculture, and all lucrative occupations for the third Caste, invested with the sacred thread, and called Vaisyas; but riches proverbially have wings, and Brahmans utterly failed in trying to chain them to their privileged orders. The laws they made for that purpose worked just in the opposite direction; for whilst minute and vexatious regulations deadened enterprise in the

* Code, ch. viii. † *Ibid.*, ch. viii.

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Vaisyas, freedom from these hindrances enabled the unprivileged multitude to follow industrial callings with success.

Beneath the Vaisya caste was a Sudra caste, and a Sudra we have just seen reckoned in the Code as a sixteenth part of the value of a Brahman. Sudras, says the Code, are the offspring of Brahma's foot! From his mouth sprang Brahmans, from his arm Kshatriyas, from his thigh Vaisyas, and then from his foot came Sudras, to wait upon these superior castes: this, having been the act of Brahma, is irrevocable and not even by his master can a Sudra be "released from a state of servitude which is natural to him."* Exclusion from religious privilege follows as a necessary consequence, as a Sudra cannot wear the sacred thread. A man uninvested with the sacred thread cannot make a fire sacrifice, and one who does not sacrifice with fire cannot obtain absorption.

"The three twice-born classes are the Sacerdotal, the Military, and the Commercial; but the fourth, or Servile, is once-born, *that is, he has no second birth from* the Gayatri, and *wears no thread;* nor is there a fifth pure class."†

To read the Veda, or even to hear the Veda read, is forbidden to Sudras; not until a man is invested with the sacred thread may he read these sacred books; and since Sudras were for ever excluded from investiture, it was a sin for a twice-born man to read the Veda even to himself if a Sudra should be present. For a Brahman to teach the Veda to Sudras was of course a greater sin, and to receive money for doing so yet more unpardonable, and to receive money from a Sudra, under any circumstances, highly unbecoming in a Brahman.

* Code, i. 81, 91. † *Ibid.*, x. 4.

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"They who receive property from a Sudra for the performance of rites to consecrated fire, are contemned as ministers of the base by all such as pronounce texts of the Vedas."

"Of those ignorant priests who serve the holy fire for the wealth of a Sudra, the giver shall always tread on the foreheads, and thus pass over miseries in the gloom of death."

Sudras are permitted to offer dressed grain, and to give praise and salutation without "any holy text;"* which means that they may perform rites procuring a *limited* amount of future bliss, but not such sacrifice as leads to absorption or unlimited beatitude. Menial service is the only occupation entirely approved of† for a Sudra; but if he fail in procuring such service, he may follow mechanical arts, with always this proviso:—

"No superfluous collection of wealth must be made by a Sudra, even though he has the power to make it; since a servile man, who has amassed riches, becomes proud, and by his insolence or neglect gives pain even to Brahmans."‡

Such is the audacious language of the Code; assuming no less than the exclusion of more than a fourth part of God's creatures from any chance of admission to the upper ranks of society, whether in this world or the next. We do not understand that Sudras were, or ever had been, in this degraded condition, but rather see a desire and design that for the future they should be suppressed. Even in the Code many passages indicate that the Sudra condition had once been different; as when a king is told that if he "stupidly look on whilst a Sudra decides causes, his kingdom will be embarrassed like a cow in deep mire:"§ and again, good men must not reside in "cities governed by

* Code, x. 126, 127.
† *Ibid.*, xi. 42, 43.
‡ *Ibid.*, x. 129.
§ *Ibid.*, viii. 21.

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Sudra kings :" passages clearly showing that Sudra judges and Sudra kings were not unknown. We even find the Code tracing Sudra pedigree up to the most holy sage Vasishta. Pitris, it says, are sons of Marichi and other Pitris; and there are five classes of Pitris, amongst which are Atri, the ancestor of Daityas, Danavas, Uragas, and Rakshasas; Bhrigu, the ancestor of Brahmans; Angiras, the ancestor of Kshatriyas; and Vasishta, the ancestor of Sudras.* This passage is followed by directions, that the ground upon which oblations are offered to Pitris should slope towards the south, and the worshipper is moreover directed to turn his face towards the south or south-west whilst performing the ceremony. Obviously there had been a time in which Sudras were not viewed as slaves or serfs.† Originally, in common with other aboriginal tribes, they had faced the Hindus in war, and taught them religious superstitions in peace. Their Goddess Nirritti, in the Rig-Veda, is entreated to keep afar off with her unfriendly looks, and not to destroy Hindu worshippers; but in the Code we find Nirritti called the "Patroness of the South-west," the same quarter as that to which oblations to forefathers were to be addressed. The probable explanation is, that the Code was written in *Brahmavarta*, to the north of Delhi; and that looking to the south-west was looking to the earlier settlements down the Indus. Under certain circumstances the Code directs a sinner, even though he should be twice-born, "to walk in a direct path towards the south-west, or the region of Nirritti, until he fall dead on the ground." And for another specified offence, an orthodox Hindu is directed to "sacrifice a black or one-eyed ass, by

* Code, iii. 192, 198. † *Ibid.*, iii. 206, 87, 91, 214, 215.

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way of meat-offering, to Nirritti, patroness of the south-west, by night, in a place where four ways meet."*

These passages tell more of alliance than of antipathy between the rival races; and more recently, in the poem called Mahabharata, Professor Wilson calls attention to Sudras being mentioned with respect. When King Yudhishthira invites kings and tribes from all quarters to assist at his inauguration, Sudras are among the guests, and for them, equally as for others, food, dwellings, and entertainments are provided.† This may perhaps corroborate the opinion expressed in our last Chapter, that the Mahabharata was not written wholly under Brahmanical influence. The real state of affairs seems to have been that Hindus and Aborigines were much inclined to coalesce; and that Brahmans propounded their laws on Caste, in order to sever such alliances and preserve their race and their religion from degradation.

In an article on the Aboriginal Races of India, written in 1852, General Briggs notifies eleven distinctions between Hindus and Aborigines, and nearly all these differences have occurred subsequent to the Rig-Veda. 1. "Hindus are divided into castes;" but they were not so divided, as we have already seen, until subsequent to the Rig-Veda. 2. "Hindu widows are forbidden to marry;" this prohibition is distinctly shown by Professor Wilson to have no place in the Rig-Veda. 3. "The Hindus venerate the cow, and abstain from eating beef;" in the Rig-Veda cows were sacrificed and eaten. 4. "The Hindus abstain from the use of fermented liquors;" fermented soma-juice is drunk in the Rig-Veda. 5. "The Hindus eat of food prepared only by those of their own Caste;" on this point we have no exact

* Code, xi. 105, 119. † J. R. A. S., May, 1842; art. *Sabha Parva.*

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evidence, but the regulation is not likely to have preceded the Brahmanical arrangement of Caste. 6. "The Hindus abhor the spilling of blood;" but in the Rig-Veda animals are sacrificed and enemies killed. 7. "The Hindus have a Brahmanical priesthood;" in the Rig-Veda kings perform sacrifices, and Brahmans are one amongst many classes of priests. 8. "The Hindus burn their dead;" the dead are certainly buried in the Rig-Veda, although sometimes previously burned. 9. "The Hindu civil institutions are all municipal, the aboriginal institutions all patriarchal;" the veneration of Pitris, forefathers, and the performance of sacrifice by kings and householders, looks as if the patriarchal had preceded the municipal amongst Hindus. 10. "The Hindus have their courts of justice composed of equals;" how early these courts were instituted we know not. 11. "The Hindus brought with them (more than three thousand years ago) the art of writing and science;" whilst General Briggs continues, "The indigenes are not only illiterate, but it is forbidden for the Hindus to teach them." Whether the Aborigines possessed literature in the days of Vedic song, is not to be known; but that portion of their population which retired to the Peninsula must undoubtedly have cultivated a literature for which they were not beholden to Hindus or Brahmans. Mr. Elphinstone cites the existence of this Tamul literature as evidence that society in the south of India had made considerable progress in civilization before the Hindus colonized there, and monopolized learning as the exclusive privilege of Brahmans. When at length Brahmans did settle in the south, they translated Sanskrit literature into the Tamul languages; and this again is a testimony to the cultivation of the Ta-

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mul inhabitants; for Brahmans would not have bestowed their precious literature upon indigenes or un-Brahmanical tribes, unless convinced that the newly subdued people could not be kept in subjection by mere force, and that it was politic to put public opinion under Brahmanical influence by an infusion of Sanskrit legends and philosophy.

We must therefore give up the idea that the population of India was ever divided into four distinct Castes. Rather we imagine Brahmans only to have been omnipotent in a few luxurious towns or celebrated hermitages, whilst the country at large was inhabited by people of mixed Caste, left very much at liberty to govern themselves. The Code states that the internal administration of the country is carried on by the lords of single townships, the lords of ten towns (or villages), the lords of a hundred, and the lords of a thousand towns. These officers are all appointed by the King, and are directed to report, each to his immediate superior, such robberies or tumults as he is unable to suppress. The lord of a single town receives in compensation "the food, drink, wood, and other articles" to which the King is entitled from that town; the lord of ten towns receives "the produce of two plough-lands, or as much ground as can be tilled by two ploughs, each drawn by six bulls; the lord of twenty, that of five plough-lands; the lord of a hundred, that of a village or small town; the lord of a thousand, that of a large town." These officers were to be under the superintendence of a still higher minister of the crown, "distinguished as a planet amongst stars," whose special duty was to defend the people from the rapacity of the inferior officers, who, the Code says (vii. 115), "are generally knaves, who seize what belongs to other men."

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The headman* of a village is in some places called *Patél* or *Patil,* in others *Chaudhari* and *Mandal:* he is the successor of the lord, whom Manu mentions as an agent of the King; the office has now become hereditary, and in point of fact he is more the representative of the people than an officer of the King, although he is regarded still in that capacity; and the Government often exercises the power of determining which individual out of the privileged family shall succeed to the office. The headman of the village still receives a certain allowance from the King or government, but the greater part of his income is now derived from fees paid by the villagers; this system is supposed by General Briggs to have accompanied Hindus into every settlement they have made, whether in India or beyond its confines. There are three things which he considers inseparable, viz. the Sanskrit language, serfdom, and municipal institutions; and although this system is no longer found in Malwa, or in great part of the Madras Presidency, yet there is reason to believe that it did once exist throughout the country; each village having its own registrar, watchman, cartwright, washerman, barber, goldsmith, and poet, who also served as schoolmaster.† And in further evidence that the institution travelled with the language, we have the statement of Sir Stamford Raffles, that Bali, an island to the east of Java, possesses municipal institutions, the Sanskrit language, and the Brahmanical religion; and again in Java there are village associations bearing the Indian name Năgri, which Mr. Crawfurd mentions as corporations governed by

* Elphinstone, Hist. India, Appendix v. p. 249.

† These officers sign their documents with the figures of the tools which they employ. See Dr. Royle's Lecture on the Great Exhibition.

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officers of their own election. This system is still characteristic of India, where "village communities" are noted "as the indestructible atoms from which empires are formed." "Village communities," says Sir Charles Metcalfe, "are little republics, having nearly everything they can want within themselves; they seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down. Hindu, Patan, Mongol, Mahratta, Sikh, English, are all masters in turn, but the village community remains the same. In times of trouble they arm and fortify themselves, . . . collect their cattle within their walls, and let the enemy pass unprovoked. If plunder and devastation be directed against themselves, and the force employed be irresistible, they flee to friendly villages; but when the storm has passed over, they return and resume their occupations."*

Thus, instead of finding India all divided between lords and slaves, we discover a rich material of middle class, which, from the earliest ages, has maintained an amount of independence most encouraging to those benevolent reformers and hopeful governors, who from time to time spring up to bless and regenerate our perplexing Indian empire.

* Elphinstone, Hist. of India, p. 63; and Sir C. T. Metcalfe, Report of Select Committee of House of Commons, 1832, vol. iii. Appendix 84, p. 331.

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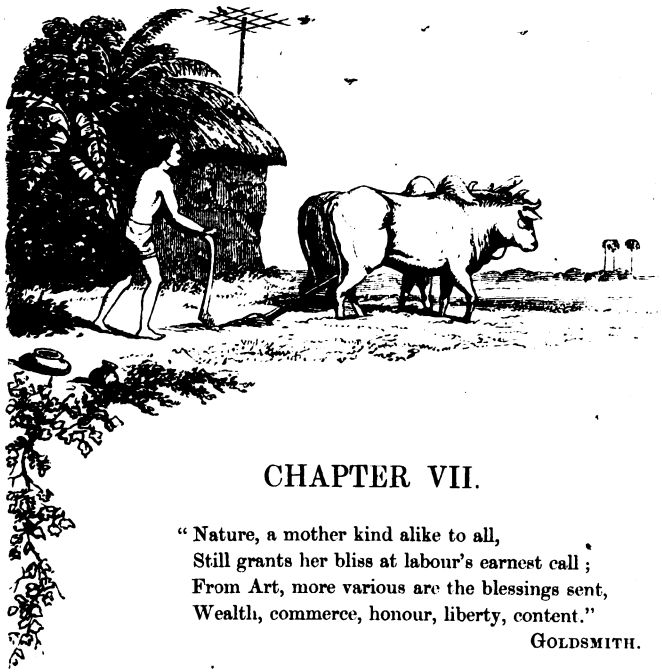

CHAPTER VII.

"Nature, a mother kind alike to all,
Still grants her bliss at labour's earnest call;
From Art, more various are the blessings sent,
Wealth, commerce, honour, liberty, content."

GOLDSMITH.

AGRICULTURE has flourished in India under all changes of dominion, and was practised even in the early period of the Rig-Veda, where *fields* are frequently mentioned and the produce carried home in carts. Models of ancient ploughs were exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851, and a species of drill-plough is attributed by Dr. Royle* to the ante-Christian centuries of which we are treating.† And not only of seed were these ancient farmers economical,

* Lecture on the Results of the Great Exhibition, p. 455.

† A plough of this description may be seen in bas-relief on Lord Aberdeen's Black Stone: it is figured in Fergusson's 'Nineveh,' p. 298; the date is supposed to be shortly before the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

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but also of the soil, sowing "plants which require transplantation in the same field with rice-plants, which mature in sixty days;"* and sowing *mudga* and *masha* beneath a tall cereal, called in the Code barley, but which is in fact a millet (*Holcus Sorghum*, Linn.);† this plan is still practised. The tall grain rises quickly, and by its shade keeps the soil cool and moist for the smaller and slower-growing mudga and masha, which are known to Europeans as the *gram* with which they feed their horses. Rotation of crops is also practised by the native farmers, who alternate the pulses, which improve the land, with the cereal grasses, which exhaust it; and to India Dr. Roxburgh believes the western world to be indebted for this system. In a country so luxuriant in cocoa-nuts and other fruits, edible roots, and water-plants, it bespeaks considerable civilization to make laws in favour of agriculture; and we therefore read with interest that—

"If the land be injured by the fault of the farmer himself, as if he fail to sow it in due time, he shall be fined ten times as much as the King's share of the crop that might otherwise have been raised."‡

And again, a Vaisya must be skilled in seeds, and in the bad or good qualities of land, and "the correct modes of measuring and weighing."§

Indigo refers itself to India by the name which it has certainly borne in Europe since the time of Pliny; in its own country it is called *Nili*, or blue. It is supposed to have been early exported to Arabia, Tyre, and Egypt, and to have been adulterated or imitated; for Pliny writes, "Cast the right indico upon live coals, it yieldeth a flame of most

* Code, ix. 38, 39.

† Roxburgh, Flora Indica, vol. iii. p. 295.

‡ Code, viii. 243.

§ *Ibid.*, ix. 330.

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excellent purple."* Indigo is a common-looking little plant, with a bluish-green juice, and is only converted into a handsome colour and a permanent dye by a process of oxygenation; and Bancroft thinks it wonderful that so many thousand years ago, the natives of India should have discovered means by which the colourable matter of the plant "might be extracted, oxygenated, and precipitated from all the other matters combined with it."

In the manufacture of iron and its conversion into steel the early Hindus showed the same proficiency. Dr. Royle expresses astonishment that "a primitive people could have overcome the difficulties of smelting iron and of forging steel:"† and that these difficulties were overcome at a very remote period we have evidence; for Dan and Javan carried Indian iron to Tyre, and the Hindus of the Rig-Veda made iron tires to their wheels, as also various tools and weapons. It has lately been discovered that the far-famed Damascus blades were of Indian steel manufactured in the west of India. Mr. Wilkinson has proved that the figuring of these swords depends upon the peculiar crystallization of the *wootz*, the name by which manufactured steel is known in India. It is prepared by breaking up the ore and throwing it into a charcoal furnace, from whence it issues in a malleable state; it is then beaten with a stone hammer on a stone anvil, into what is called "an unpromising"-looking bar; and this bar being cut into small pieces is put

* The West Indies had for a time the honour of exclusively supplying Europe with indigo, for the manufacture had been neglected in the East, whilst in A.D. 1747 it was cultivated in the West; but in 1779 Mr. Prinsep, then a merchant in Calcutta, restored the trade to India.

† Lecture on the Results of the Great Exhibition, or Lecture on the Arts and Manufacture of India, p. 464.

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into a crucible with dried branches of trees and the green berries of various shrubs, much importance being attached to the effect of different kinds of wood in producing different kinds of iron and steel. The crucibles are made of clay, and closed at the mouth with clay; after they have been exposed to the blast for two hours and a half, they are removed from the furnace, and the wootz, or steel, being allowed to cool in the crucible, the particles arrange themselves in the crystalline forms, which produce the peculiar watering, or *jowhar*, of the Damascus blades.* This Hindu plan of boiling iron and green leaves and wood together in a closed crucible appears to excel even the methods most approved at Glasgow and Sheffield, for Mr. Heath says that "iron is converted into cast steel by the natives of India in two hours and a half, while at Sheffield it requires at least four hours to melt blistered steel."† The iron and steel made in Mysore has, at present, equal fame with that of Cutch; but in ancient times, iron is always mentioned in connection with the Indus. King Porus presented Alexander the Great with about thirty pounds of steel, as a precious production of his country; and this steel was so much valued by the Persians, that, in their language, "to give an Indian answer," meant to give a cut with an Indian sword. From the countries on the Indus also came some of the most beautiful specimens of arms exhibited in the Crystal Palace in 1851, where "a dagger with pearls let into the centre of its blades," "a dagger containing another within it," and "a dagger opening with five blades," were all sent

* J. R. A. S., Feb. 16, 1839.

† Dr. Royle, Lecture on the Arts and Manufactures of India, pp. 466–468. Mr. Heath, managing director of the India Iron and Steel Company.

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by the Rajah of Pattiala, which is a Sikh principality within the province of Delhi.*

It is interesting to turn from the steel and iron factories to the silent quarries of Bijanugur, twenty-nine miles from Bellary, above the Southern Ghats. Here the granite rocks still show distinctly marks of the chisels that hewed out the huge blocks with which the grandest of old Indian cities was constructed. The streets of Bijanugur were paved with flags of granite; its walls, pillars, arches, and even flat roofs and beams, all made of granite, some blocks being fifteen feet in breadth and some monolith statues seventeen feet in height. The tools employed were chisels, wedges, levers, and hammers: the chisels small, pencil-shaped, of steel or iron, with highly-tempered points; the wedges of iron, from two to three and a half inches long; the hammers of wood, or, if iron hammers were used, a hollow was made in the striking face, and filled with lead or soft iron, to diminish the vibration and save the edge of the chisel. In working a granite quarry, the Hindus make a series of small holes about an inch square, of different depths; whilst working these water is used, to preserve the temper of the chisels, and when finished, iron wedges are introduced into the holes, and the continued simultaneous striking of the hammer splits the granite into the required masses. The Hindus are also acquainted with the use of fire in quarrying; and by covering a convex plateau or boss of granite with dry thorny acacia-wood and setting it on fire, they cause it to split off in a flake, which is easily detached by wedges and a lever.

* Dr. Royle, Lecture on the Arts and Manufactures of India, p. 470, and Illus. Cat. part iv. p. 912. A reference to this lecture will show that tin and metallic alloys were early known in India.

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For the antiquity of weaving we have evidence in the Rig-Veda, where we read of the rat gnawing the "weaver's threads;" and again in the Code, where the weaver is required to return in the woven fabric a greater weight than he received in the raw cotton;* the reason being that he is obliged to keep his threads immersed in rice-water, which necessarily increases their weight. Moist air facilitates weaving, and is indispensable for the finest qualities; it is on this account that Masulipatam and Dhacca maintained their pre-eminence, and could only be rivalled in the dry north-west by the contrivance of underground workshops. The strange appearance of an Indian spinning-wheel, made of richly carved wood and bound round by unsightly threads, was explained by the late Professor Cowper, who discovered that the clumsy-looking threads give a "tension and elasticity" not to be procured in any other way. These wheels are now silenced by the machinery of Manchester, and the time may soon arrive when it will appear incredible that a fabric of ten yards in length and one yard wide should weigh only 3 oz. 2 dwts., and pass readily through a small ring. Similar to this must have been the "woven air" of Sanskrit literature, and the robe in which a woman exhibited herself in Buddhist story and was punished for going about unclad. The muslin had been sent to Kosala as a present from the King of Kalinga.†

The products of India are traced to Greece in the time of Homer, and to Jerusalem in the days of King Solomon. The genealogy of the words for ivory and elephant is said to prove that Greece got ivory from India, through the men of Tyre, in which case the celebrated bed of Menelaus was carved from the tusks of elephants once roaming in Hindo-

* Code, viii. 356.

† Asiatic Researches, vol. xx. p. 85.

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stan. There was no word in Greek for elephant, and when Herodotus first saw the animal he called it ivory, using the Sanskrit-derived word by which the tusks were known in commerce. King Solomon's apes and peacocks, in like manner, bear Sanskrit-derived names, and the algum-wood, of which he made ceilings, screens, and balconies, is supposed to be the sandal-wood of India. The precious stones of King Hiram's cargo still lie in the hills to the west of Ajmere, rich in garnets, amethysts, chrysolites, and metals; and also in the hills of Guzerat, where agates, mocha-stones, and carnelians are found about thirty feet below the surface of the soil. Nard and bdellium, calamus and cassia, were also products of India. Nard, or spikenard, grows in the Himalaya, being a plant with small hairy roots, compared by the Arabs to ermines' tails; bdellium is a fragrant gum from Kattiwar; calamus, either the delicious lemon-grass, grown in Kew Gardens, or that which yields the fragrant grass-oil; and the cassia of Scripture is the *tamala* of Sanskrit literature.* The names of these products are not the only words which Professor Lassen remarks as Sanskrit words early introduced into Hebrew by the means of trade, and the inference is, that the "Ophir" of Scripture must have been in India, and probably on the Malabar coast, the Sanskrit words in question bearing terminations characteristic of the Dekkan. Native navigators are supposed to have shipped the goods from the Indus to some port to the south of Bombay, whence they were fetched by the Arabs or Phœnicians.

The disastrous enterprise of poor Bhuja, son of Tugra,

* Pepper, although not mentioned in King Hiram's cargo, must not be omitted when speaking of the undoubted products of India.

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shows that the singers of the Vedic hymns had heard of voyages in waters where no land could be seen. The Rig-Veda thus stands as a witness *within* India to the ancient Hindus having been a maritime people, whilst their settlements in Java furnish indisputable evidence from without; though commerce by land seems to have been more congenial to the general Asiatic character, and caravans of merchants may be ranked as one of those essential features of oriental scenery which equally characterize all ages.

"In the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis," says Dr. Vincent, "the brethren of Joseph, when about to leave him to perish, saw a company of Ishmaelite or Midianite merchants approach, to whom they resolved to sell their brother as a slave. . . . Here, upon opening the oldest history in the world, we find the Ishmaelites from Gilead conducting a caravan of camels loaded with the spices of India. The date of this transaction is more than seventeen centuries prior to the Christian era; and notwithstanding its antiquity, it has all the genuine features of a caravan crossing the desert at the present hour." The Hindus probably conducted their goods as far as Persia, and were there met by the Midianites.* Queen Esther's "white and blue hangings," at Persepolis, are at any rate attributed to India, and the word *karpas*, used in the book of Esther, is the Sanskrit name of cotton.† Fairs were national amuse-

* Dr. Vincent believes the caravans to have passed through Basra to Medina, and through Petra to Egypt and Tyre, previous to the call of Abraham, and that this is the oldest line of road in the universe.—Periplus, part ii. book iii. p. 328.

† Cotton reached Europe apparently in the time of the Crusades, through the medium of Arabia, the Arab word *kutn* becoming our cotton. See

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ments in India. Tribute was paid in kind, and kings were in the habit of holding great festivals, at which they collected all "the nobles and princes of the provinces." An interesting account of such a festival is given in the Mahabharata, mentioning the kings who attended and the offerings which they made. From Balkh (in Bactria) was presented a war-chariot inlaid with gold; to this another hill-rajah harnessed a pair of white horses, a third attended to the step or fender of the car, and a fourth king held the banner. From Kamboja were brought cloths of wool, and skins of animals that live in holes, also horses "partridge-spotted" and "parrot-nosed." From beyond the Oxus came vessels of iron, and swords with hilts of ivory; other mountaineers brought shawls of goats' hair, and silk of thread spun by worms; and silk garments we have already noticed as worn at Rama's marriage and at Dasaratha's funeral. From Tibet were sent the bushy tails of the yak, some white and some black, as is still the case, and valued by King Yudhishthira, as in the present day, for chowries, or fly-flappers: two of King Yudhishthira's brothers waved these chowries over the monarch, whilst two others fanned him with punkahs, and his friend Krishna held the sacred chank and poured upon his head the water of inauguration. Sacred chanks are shells opening to the left instead of the right; and these, with gems, coral, and "heaps of pearls," were the offering from Ceylon, whilst from the Carnatic came sandal-wood, sandal-ointment in vases of gold, and the fragrant *agallachum*,* shown by Dr. Royle

Book of Esther, ch. i. v. 6, and Dr. Royle's Lecture on the Results of the Great Exhibition, 1851, p. 487.

* Notes on the Sabha Purva of the Mahabharata, by Professor Wilson, J. R. A. S., No. xiii. May, 1842.

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to be the tree *agala,* or eagle-wood,* most used when in a state of decay.

A caravan with freights of this description is described in the story of Nala and Damayanti:†—

"A caravan of merchants, elephants and steeds, and cars,
And beyond a pleasant river with its waters cool and clear;
'T was a quiet stream and waveless, girt about with spreading canes;
There the cuckoo, there the osprey, there the red geese clamouring stood;
Swarmed the turtles, fish, and serpents; there rose many a stately isle."

Damayanti is a lovely princess, wandering forlorn in search of her husband; the merchants take her for a spirit and are unwilling to speak, but she entreats assistance in her search for her lost husband. The chief says that hitherto he has encountered only "elephants, tigers, buffaloes, and bears," but he consents that Damayanti shall travel to the next city under his protection, and the caravan proceeds until—

"A lake of loveliest beauty, fragrant with the lotus flowers,
Saw those merchants, wide and pleasant, with fresh grass and shady trees;
Flowers and fruits bedecked its borders, where the birds melodious sang:
In its clear, delicious waters, soul-enchanting, icy-cool,
With their horses all o'er-wearied, thought they there to plunge and bathe."

The captain gave a signal and they encamped, but in the dead of the night down came a herd of wild elephants to the lake for water; for a moment they stood amazed at the

* Illustrated Catalogue of Great Exhibition, part iv. Colonies, p. 878.

† Poems by Dean Milman, vol. iii.

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slumbering caravan, but presently, scenting the tame elephants,—

"Forward rush they, fleet and furious, . . .
Irresistible the onset of the rushing ponderous beasts. . . .
Strewn was all the way before them with the boughs and trunks of trees,
On they crashed to where the travellers slumbered by the Lotus Lake;
Trampled down without a struggle, helpless on the earth they lay;
'Woe, oh woe!' shrieked out the merchants; wildly some began to fly,
In the forest thickets plunging; some stood gasping, blind with sleep,
And the elephants down beat them with their tusks, their trunks, their feet.
Many saw their camels dying, mingling with the men on foot,
And, in frantic tumult rushing, wildly struck each other down;
Many, miserably shrieking, cast them down upon the earth;
Many climbed the trees in terror; on the rough ground stumbled some.
Thus, in various wise and fatal, by the elephants assailed,
Lay that caravan so wealthy, scattered all about or slain.
Such, so fearful was the tumult, the three worlds seemed all appalled.
'T is a fire amid the encampment,—save ye, fly ye for your lives!
Lo! your precious pearls ye trample; take them up, why fly so fast?
Save them, 't is a common venture!"

The poor Princess was suspected of being in some way the cause of the calamity, and threatened with death from clods and bamboos; but happily some "Veda-reading Brahmans" survived the scattered host, and took her in charge.

We must now conclude the subject of manufactures and commerce, by noticing the place which Commerce holds in the Law Book.

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"Travelling with merchandise"* was an occupation fit only for those whom the "twice-born" despise; but "lending at interest" was a virtuous mode of subsistence, especially recommended to the third Caste (Vaisyas), although not available for Kshatriyas and Brahmans. Neither might the two first Castes *receive* interest on loans; but they might *borrow*, if for a pious use. Money-lending is carefully treated in the Code, which thus exhibits the financial system of their commerce.

The first regulation is one attributed to Vasishta, which we remember as the name of the prime minister of Dasaratha, the King of Ayodhya:—

"A lender of money may take, in addition to his capital, . . . an eightieth part of a hundred by the month;

"Or he may take two in the hundred by remembering the duty of good men; for, by taking two in the hundred, he becomes not a sinner for gain:

"He may thus take, in the direct order of the classes, two in the hundred *from a Brahman*, three *from a soldier*, four *from a Vaisya*, and five *from a mechanic or Sudra*, but never more, as interest by the month."†

The subject of pledges is much considered: as, if a man use an article given in pledge without the owner's consent, he must give up his whole interest. Neither a pledge nor a deposit are lost by lapse of time; but in general if the owner sees any chattel enjoyed "by others for ten years while, though present, he says nothing, that chattel he shall not recover." "Grain, fruit, wool, hair, and beasts of burden," are named amongst the articles on which it was usual to raise money; but in all cases five per cent. is considered sufficient interest, and more than this "the wise

* Code of Manu, x. 46. † *Ibid.*, viii. 140, 141, 142.

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call usurious." Special regulations are made for the insurance of goods travelling either by land or by sea, as:—

"A lender at interest, on *the risk* of safe carriage, who has agreed on the place and time, shall not receive such interest, if *by accident* the goods are not carried to the place, or within the time.

"Whatever interest, *or price of the risk*, shall be settled *between the parties*, by men well acquainted with sea voyages or journeys by land, with times and with places, such interest shall have legal force."*

"For a long passage, the freight must be proportioned to places and times; but this must be understood of passages up and down rivers: at sea there can be no settled freight."†

The part which the Code assigns to the King in reference to commerce is too laborious, we imagine, to have been usually fulfilled by kings; but we may understand it to mean that either King, or Brahman, or Patél, as the case might be, must—

"Establish rules for the sale and purchase of all marketable things, having duly considered whence they come and whither they must be sent, how long they have been kept, what may be gained by them, and what has been expended on them.

"Once in five nights, or at the close of every half-month, *according to the nature of the commodities*, let the King make a regulation for market prices in the presence of those experienced men.

"Let all weights and measures be well ascertained by him; and once in six months let him examine them."‡

The money used was specified weights of gold, silver, and copper: one seed of *gunga*, or hemp, was the weight called *ractica*; five racticas of gold were one *masha*, sixteen such mashas one *suverna*, four suvernas one *pala*.

Two racticas of silver made one *mashaca*, and sixteen mashacas a silver *dharana* or *purana*.

* Code of Manu, viii. 156, 157. † *Ibid.*, viii. 406.
‡ *Ibid.*, viii. 401, 402, 403.

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A *karsha*,* or eighty racticas, of copper were a *pana* or *karshapana*; and this piece of copper, weighing eighty hempseeds, was the lowest wages per day for a servant, he being entitled in addition to two cloths for apparel each half-year, and to a drona of grain each month: one pana was also the toll at a ferry for an empty cart; half a pana for a man with a load; but—

"Waggons, filled with goods packed up, shall pay toll in proportion to their value; for empty vessels and bags, and for men ill-apparelled, a very small toll shall be demanded."†

The King also appears to have claimed a share in all 'treasure trove;' to old hoards deposited in the ground, which any one discovers, or to precious minerals‡ he is entitled to half; and the following passage from the Drama of 'Sacontala' would make it appear that the money of shipwrecked merchants, dying without heirs, also passed to the King.

The chief minister says, "I have carefully stated a case which has arisen in the city, and accurately committed it to writing: let the King deign to consider it."§ The King says immediately, "Give me the leaf," and reads—"Be it presented at the footstool of the King, that a merchant . . . who had extensive commerce at sea, was lost in a late shipwreck; he had no child born, and has left a fortune of many millions, which belong, if the King commands, to the royal treasury." The King does not claim the property, but says, that "when any of his subjects lose a kinsman, he will supply the place of that kinsman."

The slight facts here collected show the commercial class bearing a relation towards the king and the learned aristo-

* Code of Manu, 134, 135, 136.
† *Ibid.*, viii. 404, 405.
‡ *Ibid.*, viii. 39.
§ Works of Sir W. Jones, vol. vi.

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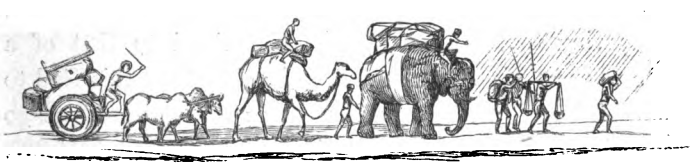
cracy, not altogether peculiar either to India or to centuries preceding our era. The sovereign and his court enjoyed foreign luxuries, and claimed tribute from the profits of trade. Industrial occupations were encouraged and nominally held in honour; but practically, the working of the law excluded all who engaged in arts or commerce from aristocratic rank and privilege. Amongst other restrictions it was decreed that if a Vaisya married a Sudra his children ceased to be Vaisyas, and if he married a woman of the higher caste the children became outcasts. Cumbersome enactments as to where he might go, and what he might eat, and what he might do, were also inconsistent with the enterprise and freedom necessary to commercial success; and the result was, that whilst banking and money-lending were regarded as orthodox and gentlemanly occupations, the more adventurous parts of commerce were performed by men free from hereditary rank and conventional restrictions,—often "sons of the twice-born, said to be degraded,—who are considered as low-born, and subsist by such employments as the twice-born despise."*

* Code of Manu.



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CHAPTER VIII.

WOMEN.

"I thought on a' the tales, Alice,
O' woman's love and faith;
Of Truth that smiled at fear, Alice,
And Love that conquer'd death;
Affection blessing hearts and homes,
When joy was far awa',
And Fear and Hate; but Love, O Love!
Aboon and over a'!" NICOLL.

A THOUSAND years B.C. Hindu women appear to have been as free as Trojan dames or the daughters of Judæa: hymns in the Rig-Veda mention them with respect and affection, comparing the goodness of the God Agni to that of a "brother for his sisters," and the brightness of this God to the shining of a woman in her home; women moreover go out adorned for festivals, or mingle in the midnight foray. Even in the succeeding phase of Hindu life, when Brahmans contemplated the soul beneath the shadow of Himavat, women attended their discourses and took part in their

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discussions. We find in one of the Upanishads a king holding a solemn sacrifice, and inviting his chief guests to state their opinions on theology, and amongst these guests "a learned female named Garga"* is conspicuous. A more pleasing instance of women's interest in holy themes is afforded by a conversation between Yajnyawalcya and his wife Maitreya :† the sage announces his intention of abandoning the world and entering upon the life of seclusion and asceticism which the Code prescribes for Brahmans in advancing years; he tells her that he will divide his property between her and his second wife, but Maitreya asks, "Should I become immortal if this whole earth full of riches were mine?" "No," replies her husband, "riches serve for the means of living, but immortality is not attained through wealth." Maitreya declares that she has then no use for riches, and entreats her husband to communicate the knowledge which leads to immortality. "Dear wert thou to me," Yajnyawalcya replies, "and a pleasing sentiment dost thou make known; come, sit down, I will expound; do thou endeavour to comprehend:" and then a discourse follows, showing that abstraction procures immortality, because affections relate to the soul, and the worshipper must learn to contemplate the soul alone, "since everything is soul;" and whatever objects are beheld, the aim must be to merge all thought and feeling into the universal Soul.

In the Code, women in the abstract are put upon a level with Sudras, children, and pupils.

"Three persons,—a wife, a son, and a slave,—are declared by law to have, in general, no wealth exclusively their own: the wealth

* Colebrooke's Essays, vol. i. p. 70. † *Ibid.*, p. 66.

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which they earn is regularly acquired for the man to whom they belong."*

"A wife, a son, a servant, a pupil, and a younger whole brother may be corrected when they commit faults, with a rope, or the small shoot of a cane."†

"For women, children, persons of crazy intellect, the old, the poor, and the infirm, the king shall order punishment with a whip, a twig, or a rope."‡

"To attain the celestial world is denied to Sudras; but a woman or a Sudra may perform acts leading to temporal good."§

Women necessarily hold this subservient position because they are not "invested with the sacrificial string;" it being ordained that the "nuptial ceremony" shall be "the complete institution of women," and hold the place of the second birth received by men of rank.‖ This being the case, it is a man's duty "to give his daughter in marriage" "to an excellent and handsome youth of the same class," even though she have not attained eight years of age;¶ and if the father neglect this, she may by the time she is eleven years old choose a bridegroom for herself, provided she choose one of equal rank. We have already had an instance of how this was effected in the Swayambara, at Panchala, which concluded by the lovely Draupadi throwing the marriage garland over the heroic Arjuna. We shall find that Brahmans awarded love, admiration, amusements, jewels, and ornaments, most liberally to women as wives; the only peculiarity of their system being, that a woman could have nothing of her own. "Hear now the laws concerning women," says the Code:**—

"By a girl, or by a young woman, or by a woman advanced in

* Code, viii. 16.
† *Ibid.*, 299.
‡ *Ibid.*, ix. 230.
§ *Ibid.*, ii. 223.
‖ *Ibid.*, ii. 67.
¶ *Ibid.*, ix. 88.
** *Ibid.*, 146, 151, 153, 156.

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years, nothing must be done, even in her own dwelling-place, according to her mere pleasure.

"In childhood must a female be dependent on her father; in youth, on her husband; her lord being dead, on her sons. . . . A woman must never seek independence:

"Never let her wish to separate herself from her father or her sons, for by a separation from them she exposes both families to contempt:

"She must always live with a cheerful temper, with good management in the affairs of the house, with great care of the household furniture, and with a frugal hand in all her expenses:

"Him to whom her father has given her, or her brother with the paternal assent, let her obsequiously honour while he lives; and when he dies, let her never neglect him.

"When the husband has performed the nuptial rites with texts of the *Veda*, he gives bliss continually to his wife here below, and he will give her happiness in the next world.

"Though unobservant of approved usages, or enamoured of another woman, or devoid of good qualities, yet a husband must be constantly revered as a god by a virtuous wife.

"No sacrifice is allowed to women apart from their husbands, no religious rite, no fasting; as far only as a wife honours her lord, so far she is exalted in heaven.

"A faithful wife who wishes to attain in heaven the mansion of her husband, must do nothing unkind to him, be he living or dead."

Obedience to her husband is the beginning and the middle and the end of female duty. If a wife neglect her husband because he drinks or gambles, she must be punished and deprived of her ornaments; but if she drinks or acts immorally, she may be superseded by another wife.* If a good wife dies before her husband, he will procure life for her in another world by sacrifice, and then "light again the nuptial fire." If the husband die first, the wife must continue till death "performing harsh duties" and "prac-

* Code, ix. 78, 84.

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tising the incomparable rules of virtue, followed by women devoted to one husband." A second marriage would make her despicable, whilst death would procure certain bliss; but the Code gives no hint of its being desirable that widows should be burned with the husband's corpse: still less is this custom advocated by the Rig-Veda; in which a passage supposed to inculcate this barbarity is found by Professor Wilson to have an entirely different meaning. A woman cannot even inherit rank, that is, she cannot transmit her own inherited rank to her children: if she marry a *Dwija,* or man invested with the sacred thread, the children will have their father's rank; but if she, the daughter of a Dwija, marry a Sudra, or any uninvested person, her children fall *beneath* the rank of the father, and the son of a Sudra by a Brahman woman is the lowest of mortals. The same rule does not altogether hold regarding men, only a man of rank (a Dwija) must not make a Sudra woman his *first* wife; and the reason for this is, that his sacrifices to the Gods, and oblations to the Manes, and hospitalities to strangers, must be supplied by her, and neither Gods nor Manes would be propitiated by such offerings.* No punishment attaches to marriage between twice-born men and women of a rank below them, but the children of such a marriage do not appear to have been legally entitled to investiture with the sacred thread.†

From these extracts it is evident that "woman's rights" were wholly ignored by the Brahmanical code; but as daughters and wives are often too happy to require rights, we usually lose sight of this unpleasant truth, and find ample reason to admire Hindu representations of domestic

* Code, iii. 18. † *Ibid.*, x. 6.

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bliss. "Where females are honoured, there the deities are pleased," says the Code; but if they are dishonoured and "pronounce an imprecation on a house, that house with all that belongs to it will utterly perish."*

There can scarcely be a more pleasing picture of an affectionate wife than that given of our friend Damayanti, who was discovered alone in the gloomy forest. In an earlier part of the story, she is described as very lovely, and the only daughter of Bhima, King of Vidarbha, supposed to mean Berar. Nala was the youthful monarch of Nishadha, at no great distance from Vidarbha, and although these two young people had never met, they fell in love by merely hearing of each other's beauty and merit. King Nala imparts his wishes to the sacred birds called Hansa, and a flock of these wild geese take flight in consequence for Vidarbha, and discover the lovely Damayanti in a garden attached to her father's palace and surrounded by her hundred damsels. The Hansa allure her to a little distance from her attendants, and there, by judicious discourse, succeed in making the young princess fully participate her lover's emotions. From this moment poor Damayanti is observed to pine, and her father determines that she shall hold her Swayambara, or chose her husband amongst attendant suitors.

As soon as this is announced, Nala contrives to procure a private interview, fearing lest his intended bride might not recognize him amongst the numerous chiefs and nobles whom such an invitation would assemble. When the anticipated day arrived, elephants, steeds, and chariots brought all the lords of earth as suitors; they came wearing fra-

* Code, iii. 56, 58.

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grant garlands and rich earrings, and entered the court through the golden columns of the portal arch.

But amongst the earthly suitors appeared four Gods, each of whom, knowing Damayanti's inclination, assumed the form of Nala. The damsel knew that four out of the five Nalas present must be Gods, and she perfectly appreciated the honour they intended for her; but her heart was fixed on the real human Nala, and instead of rejoicing in celestial homage, she was distracted at finding it impossible to distinguish her earthly lover. In this dilemma she appealed to the Gods themselves, entreated their compassion and implored their aid. The Gods are amazed to find themselves rejected, but, in pity for the maiden's anguish, show signs of their divinity; Damayanti chooses him she loves, and Nala becomes the happy bridegroom. After the nuptial ceremony, the newly-married pair reside at Nishadha, have two children, and enjoy supreme felicity, until Nala has a spell cast over him by a certain evil spirit. The King is described as a most virtuous monarch, well-read in the four Vedas and the Puranas, gentle to all living creatures, true in word and strict in vow; but in marrying Damayanti he excited the jealousy of the demon Kali, who had himself wished for the damsel's love, and Kali in consequence was for ever haunting the palace, and watching for some unguarded moment in which to throw his evil spirit into the unhappy King. Negligence of a trifling prescribed ceremony gave, at length, the wished-for opportunity, and the virtuous Nala, now possessed by a demon, gave himself up to gambling.

For months he continued to throw the dice with ill success, his wife venturing now and then a sad remonstrance, and his wise counsellors saying that he is no longer himself;

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but Nala, like other desperate gamblers, will listen to no advice. Damayanti then convenes the council in his name, and gets leave to send the children with a trusty charioteer to her father's court at Vidarbha, where alone she feels they will be safe. The infatuated King stakes his jewels, his garments, and even his kingdom, and all are lost. The demon strives hard to make him stake his wife, but does not succeed; even in madness, the King's virtue and affection were proof against that trial: but he was houseless and penniless, for his adversary decreed death to whoever should befriend him, and chased him from his palace; the dethroned monarch went forth into the woods, but not alone, for the faithful Damayanti followed. Too desperate to be soothed, her husband felt her gentle presence as an aggravation of his misery, and instead of desiring her companionship he showed where ran the road conducting to her father's home. She understood the sign, but said that with her afflicted, breaking heart and sinking limbs she could not leave him: she wished to soothe his weariness, and said all physicians owned that in sorrow there was no healing herb or balsam equal to a wife; therefore if she went to Vidarbha, he must go also. But that was an insupportable idea, for he could not endure to be seen by Bhima in his base extremity. At night they seek the refuge of a forest hut, and three times, whilst Damayanti sleeps, he resolves upon escape: he thinks that if he were aways he would go to her father, mother, and children, but that while he remains there is only misery for all.

"And departing, still departing, he returned again, again,
Dragged away by that bad demon,—ever by his love drawn back."

And after thus oscillating "like a swing," he is torn away by Kali, and flies afar.

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When Damayanti wakes, she finds herself deserted, and wanders hither and thither until she meets the caravan of merchants, with whom we have already seen her. After the catastrophe of the elephants, she escaped with some Brahmans, who conducted her to a town called King Chedi's City: here she enters, disturbed, emaciate, wretched, her hair dishevelled, the boys of the place following her footsteps. The mother of the King, seated on a lofty terrace, is struck by her appearance, and sends a confidential servant, called a nurse, to bring in the sorrowful wanderer: to this high lady Damayanti tells her story, and is persuaded to remain with her at Chedi, only making the condition that she shall not eat broken victuals or "wash feet," which would have been Sudra service; and that she shall be protected from all suitors.

After a time, this poor wanderer is discovered by messengers from Vidarbha, and taken to her father's court and reunited to her children; and then her anxiety to win back her husband becomes irrepressible; but tedious was her search, and numerous her schemes, before she succeeded.

Nala had become charioteer to a King of Ayodhya, who taught him the secrets of dice in return for a knowledge of horses; for it seems as if Nala's fault had consisted in being ignorant of that science, whereas in the knowledge of horses he excelled. As soon as Rituparna, the King of Ayodhya, had fully imparted to his charioteer the science of dice, Kali was defeated, the spell broken, and the evil spirit leaving him entered a tree, which perished instantly. At this juncture a friendly Naga king (or king of snakes) offered to restore Nala to his former appearance, and he might then have returned to his kingdom and his wife, but

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news arrived at Ayodhya that Damayanti was about to hold another Swayambara,—which was a stratagem contrived by his deserted wife, in order to rouse up her missing lord and lead to their reunion. Damayanti's ceaseless inquiries had led her to suspect that the King of Ayodhya's skilful charioteer was no other than King Nala, and to Ayodhya therefore (but to no other place) she sent intimation that on the dawn of the succeeding day Damayanti was about to choose a second lord. Rituparna, King of Ayodhya, wishes to attend, and says *literally* to his charioteer:—

"This woman, having bound us, attracts by her good qualities:
Who (thus) drawn by a woman (can say) nay?
The assembly—such the announcement—is tomorrow:
Thus our way by measurement is one hundred yojanas."

One hundred yojanas may be five hundred miles or it may be nine hundred, and as Ayodhya stands for Oude, and Vidarbha is supposed to mean Berar, we must accept the extension, and whether four hundred or nine hundred makes small difference, the distance being in either case an anticipation of railway power and speed.

At the King's request, poor "Nala's heart was torn with anguish," but still he desired to be present himself, and promised that his master should arrive within the time; and his wonderful proficiency in the science of horses enabled him to perform the prodigious feat. Damayanti knew at once the peculiar tramp of his steeds, and mounted to the palace-roof to behold once more her "Nala, prince of men."

Damayanti's mother was the only person in her secret; her father, King Bhima, knew nothing of her stratagem, and was astonished at the arrival of a guest, whilst the guest

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and his charioteer were equally astonished to find no preparation for a marriage festival. All however keep their counsel with becoming dignity, and leave Damayanti to pursue her schemes without disturbance; whilst she, baffled by Nala's persevering incognito, has some difficulty in bringing about a successful *dénouement*. She at length persuades her mother to allow her to have a secret interview with the mysterious charioteer; and then she works upon his feelings, forcing him to acknowledge himself to be her husband Nala, and with great difficulty convincing him that the idea of a second marriage had never for a moment been really entertained, but that she "imagined the subtle wile" to lure him to her. The sun, moon, and winds coming forward to give testimony to her truth, her husband at length gives up his jealous doubts, resumes his proper form, and is happily reunited to his loving wife.

In this beautiful little poem we find more independence of action than the Code would willingly have accorded to women; but it occurs as an episode in the Mahabharata, which is essentially an heroic poem, describing more of the Kshatriya than of the Brahman class. Damayanti's marriage at the commencement is a similar festival to that held in Panchala for Draupadi; but it is only amongst princes and princesses that we read of such marriages, and no instance is given of a marriage in the Brahman Caste. The story of Nala is told to Yudhishthira, to console him on the occasion of his having lost his kingdom at a game of draughts; but neither the one nor the other of these gambling monarchs is blamed by the poet in accordance with the precepts of Manu, and on all occasions the tone of the Epics is so much more free than that of the Code, that they

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give one the impression of having had Brahman editors rather than Brahman authors. Gambling is a vice particularly reprehended in the Code, which gives the following remarkable verses referring to it:—

"Gaming, either with inanimate or with animated things, let the King exclude wholly from his realm: both those modes of play cause destruction to princes:

"Such play with dice, or by matches *between rams and cocks*, amounts to open theft: and the King must ever be vigilant in suppressing both *modes of play*.

"Gaming with lifeless things is known among men by the name of *dynta*; but *samahwaya* signifies a match between living creatures.

"Let the King punish corporally at discretion both the gamester and the keeper of a gaming-house, whether they play with inanimate or animated things. . . .

"Gamesters, public dancers, and singers, . . . let him instantly banish from the town."*

And gambling is still further discouraged by the decree that "money lost at play" cannot be recovered from the son of a debtor or surety.†

In another episode of the Mahabharata, we find the Pandu brothers roaming in and arriving at a village; they are kindly welcomed by a family of poor Brahmans, who prove to be in great affliction, because a human victim is required from them as an offering to the local deity. We cannot but think that this deity was the earth-goddess, Tari Pennu, and that her worship resembled the systems of human sacrifice about which Captain Macpherson has furnished so much valuable information.‡ Whilst reposing in an inner apartment, the five brothers overhear the father, mother, and daughter of this simple forest family,

* Code, ix. 221–225. † *Ibid.*, viii. 159.

‡ R. A. S. I., vol. xiii. part ii. p. 216.

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each urging a separate claim to be allowed to suffer for the rest.

The father commences, saying, that never would he be so base as to give a victim from his house and consent himself to live; but still he expresses great anxiety at not knowing how to provide a place of refuge for his wife, daughter, and little son after his removal. He cannot, he says, surrender his faithful wife, the sweet friend given to him by the Gods; nor his daughter, whom Brahma made to be a bride and the mother of heroes; nor yet his son; but if he offer himself, sorrow will pursue him in the world to come, and his abandoned wife and children will be unable to live without him.

The wife next speaks, and chides her husband for yielding to grief like one of lowly caste: for, "who the Vedas know, must know—

"Fate inevitable orders, all must yield to death in turn:
Hence the doom, the irrevocable, it beseems not thee to mourn.
Man hath wife, and son, and daughter, for the joy of his own heart;
Wherefore wisely check thy sorrow; it is I must hence depart:
'Tis the wife's most holy duty,—law on earth without repeal,—
That her life she offer freely, when demands her husband's weal.'

She goes on to argue that he can support and guard the children when she is gone, but that she would have no power to guard and support them without him. Deprived of his protection, "rude and reckless men," she says, would come seeking their blameless daughter; and helpless and beset on every side, she would be unable to check the suit of Sudra lovers. She concludes by saying that her honoured husband will find another wife, to whom he will be as gentle and kind as he has been to her.

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"Hearing thus his wife, the husband fondly clasp'd her to his breast,
And their tears they pour'd together, by their mutual grief oppprest."

When the daughter overheard the troubled discourse of her parents, she put in her claim to be the offered victim; for if they died before her she would sink to bitterest misery, but if she died to preserve them, she would "then become immortal and partake of bliss divine."

Whilst they were all thus weeping, the little son opened wide his eyes, and lisped out in broken accents:—

"'Weep not, father! weep not, mother! O my sister, weep not so!'
First to one and then to the other, smiling went he to and fro;
Then a blade of spear-grass lifting, thus in bolder glee he said,
'With this spear-grass will I kill him, this man-eating giant, dead.'
Though o'erpower'd by bitterest sorrow, as they heard their prattling boy,
Stole into the parents' bosom mute and inexpressive joy."*

Happily the child's chivalry was not required, for the Pandu brothers went forth and conquered the spirit of evil, whether in the form of "man-eating giant" or "earth-goddess."

Whilst occupied with these beautiful Sanskrit tales, we feel tempted to exalt Hinduism above all other heathen institutions; but when hereafter we may have occasion to follow Hindu women into later centuries, and to consider in matter-of-fact prose to what results the legal regulations tended, we may perhaps limit our admiration to the poets, who exhibit the universal affections of human nature. Women in the poems appear as forest-trees, flowering in wild luxuriance; whilst women in real life resemble flower-

* Translated by H. Milman, Dean of St. Paul's.

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ing pears and peaches nailed against the wall. In comparing ancient India with other early countries, you cannot fail to note the absence of queens or of women in any way conspicuous: you meet with no Semiramis or Cleopatra, no Miriam or Sappho, no Deborah, not even with a witch of Endor. This thoroughly domestic character of women is undoubtedly the happiest, provided it be the effect of completeness in home happiness, and as such it is represented in the beautiful episodes which we have been considering; and as at present our attention is limited to the heroic age, all moralizing may be suspended whilst we fully yield to the enjoyment of concluding this Chapter with one more tale from the Mahabharata.

A king named Aswapati sighed for offspring, and, after praying in vain for eighteen years, the gods of heaven sent him a daughter, who grew up so "bright in her surpassing beauty" that she appeared like a child of the immortals, and the princes around were so dazzled, that none sought her for a bride; this distressed her father, and he said that she must go now and make choice herself.

"Meekly bow'd the modest maiden with her eyes upon the ground,
And departed as he bade her, with attendants troop'd around:
Many a hermitage she traversed, riding in a gold-bright car,
Many a wilderness and forest, holy places near and far."

And when she came back she told her father that she had found a blind old king who had been driven from his throne by a ruthless kinsman, and who with his beloved wife had taken refuge in a hermit grove and therein passed his life; and then she says that it is his brave son, Satyavan, whom her heart has chosen,—"Satyavan has all my love." At this announcement a holy man named Narad, who hap-

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pened to be present, exclaims in grief that she little knows what care and woe she chooses in choosing Satyavan; and in answer to her father's inquiries Narad allows that the young man is—

"Learned as the Gods' own teacher, glorious as the sun is he;
With the earth's untiring patience, and great Indra's bravery."

And in answer to further questions, says, he is noble,

"True, and great of soul;
Bountiful is he, and modest,—every sense does he control;
Gentle, brave, all creatures love him, keeping in the righteous way,
Number'd with the holy hermits, pure and virtuous as they."

But all these virtues lie under a cloud, which makes them profitless, for in a year, counting from this day, "Satyavan will die." "Go then, my dearest child," says the King, "and choose again;" but the daughter answers,

"Be he virtuous or worthless, many be his days or few,
Once for all I choose my husband; to that choice will I be true."

The sage and her father give way to her decided wishes, and in due time the young couple are married, and live in great happiness with the hermits in the grove. Savitri put aside her jewels, and wore the coarse raiment usually adopted by hermits, and, by her meekness and affection, won the hearts of all with whom she dwelt.

"Sadly, sadly, as she counted, day by day flew swiftly by,
And the fated time came nearer when her Satyavan must die.
Yet three days and he must perish, sadly thought the loving wife;
And she vowed to fast, unresting, for his last three days of life."

Her husband's father feared that the trial would be too great for her, but she answered, "Firm resolve has made me vow it,—firm resolve will give me strength." She kept

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her vow and maintained her fast; and when the third day dawned, and the fire of worship was kindled, and the morning rites performed, she reverently saluted the aged Brahmans and her husband's honoured parents, but still refused food. Presently her husband took his axe upon his shoulder to go to the wood, but she begged him to let her go also; he replies:—

"'All unknown to thee the forest, rough the path and weary thou;
How then will thy feet support thee, fainting from thy fasting vow?'
'Nay, I sink not from my fasting, and no weakness feel today;
I have set my heart on going, oh, forbid me not, I pray.'"

Savitri has always kept her sad secret from her husband, and he has therefore no idea of her real reason for wishing to accompany him; he however consents, calls her attention to the lovely woods, stately peacocks, and flowers of brilliant hue, but she can look only upon him and mourn him as one about to die. She gathers cooling fruits, and he makes the wood resound with the strokes of his hatchet; but soon a thrilling agony shoots through his temples. She sits down upon the ground, and resting his hand upon her breast he sleeps, but,—

"Sudden, lo! before Savitri stood a great and awful one,
Red as blood was his apparel, bright and glowing as the sun;
In his hand a noose was hanging: he to Satyavan stood nigh,
And upon the weary sleeper fix'd his fearful glittering eye."

This awful apparition was Yama, God of Death, come to bind and take the spirit of Satyavan: having done this he moved towards the south, Savitri closely following. Yama tries to persuade her to go back, but she says, No, wherever her husband goes there she will go also. Yama praises her sweet speech, and offers her any boon except the life of

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Satyavan; and she begs that the blind king, her father-in-law, may be restored to sight, but without relinquishing her first request. Yama tries again and again to get rid of her, and says she will faint:—

"Can I faint when near my husband? where he goes, my path shall be:
I will follow where thou leadest: listen once again to me."

Nothing can induce her to return without Satyavan, and at length love conquers death: Yama relents; the happy wife hastens to where her husband's body lay, and, leaning upon her faithful bosom, he awakes again to sense and life. A very touching conversation follows, during which he gradually recovers his recollection; but his wife, avoiding any full explanation of what had been occurring, says:—

"Night's dark shadows round us fall;
When the morrow's light returneth, dearest, I will tell thee all:
Up, then, and away, I pray thee, come unto thy parents' love!
See! the sun long time has vanish'd, and the night grows black above."

And accordingly they return to the hermitage, where Satyavan finds his father no longer blind, and every kind of happiness awaits them.*

* 'Savitri, or the Faithful Wife,' translated from the original Sanskrit into English verse, by R. T. H. Griffith, Oxford. See also an article in the 'Westminster Review,' Oct. 1848, on Indian Epic Poetry, which most interesting paper is attributed to Mr. Cowell.

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CHAPTER IX.

PHILOSOPHY.

"Where is the sweet repose of heart's repenting,
The deep calm sky, the sunshine of the soul?
Now heaven and earth are to our bliss consenting,
And all the Godhead joins to make us whole."—KEBLE.

IN all Brahmanical literature we meet with anxious questioning concerning man's soul and the universal soul, and the means by which perpetual transmigration may be escaped. This knowledge was taught in Upanishads, which professed great reverence for the old Vedas, but started discussions upon subjects quite beyond their range: of this we had some specimens in our Second Chapter, where Nachiketa went to the abode of Yama, God of Death, and entreated him to impart that "knowledge which leads to absorption." By degrees philosophers discovered that the teaching of the Upanishads was contrary to that of the Vedas, and, enrolling their new views into systems, they avowed themselves critics and opponents of the ancient books. Three systems obtained celebrity, the Sankhya, the Nyaya, and the Vedanta; and each system being divided into two parts, six schools of philosophy arose, somewhere

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between 700 and 600 B.C., which systems are still in force, and studied at Benares. The Sankhya system was the earliest of these, and also the most schismatic, for it starts with declaring that the Vedas have *failed* to communicate means of absolute and final liberation. Indra and other Gods, it says, declare that by drinking soma-juice they have become immortal; but in another place they say that, "Many thousands of Indras and other Gods have passed away in successive ages:" a different method is therefore necessary, "consisting in a discriminative knowledge of perceptible principles, and of the imperceptible one, and of the thinking soul."*

The Sankhya system originated with a philosopher named Kapila, who had migrated through many states of existence, and remembered the Vedas in one of his former lives. He ventured nevertheless to think that the soma-draughts, fire-worship, and the sacrifices enjoined by the Vedas, procured only happiness of limited duration, and he expounded aphorisms to secure eternal liberation.

Kapila's aphorisms are still extant; but either it was his habit to explain orally, or his written explanations have perished, for the aphorisms alone are wholly unintelligible. His pupils made and collected commentaries, and put the whole in verse, called Karika; and the Sankhya Karika, or memorial verses of the Sankhya, is the chief source from which we now derive a knowledge of this curious anticipation of modern metaphysics.† Its leading principles are, that knowledge discriminates twenty-five principles: the Soul, which is unchangeable, is one; Nature, the material of creation, another; Intellect, Buddhi, a fourth; Egotism,

* Wilson's 'Sankhya Karika,' p. 14. † *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 80, 52.

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or self-consciousness, a fifth; then follow the five subtle elements which produce our senses, eleven organs, and five gross elements. Nature, or Prakriti, has three qualities, the good, the bad or perturbed, and the dark. The good quality is explained as "kindliness, restraint of the organs, correct judgment, attainment of knowledge, and supernatural power; the bad, or impetuous, as passion, anger, covetousness, sternness, discontent;" and the dark, as "madness, intoxication, atheism, sloth, and other vices." These three qualities are moreover described by their effects, as pleasure, pain, and indifference, and said to co-operate like a lamp, by union of contraries, that is, "as a lamp, which is composed of the opposites, a wick, oil, and flame, illuminates objects, so the qualities of goodness, foulness, and darkness, although contrary to one another, effect a common purpose. Buddhi (the intellect), which is produced by Nature (Prakriti), partakes of these qualities. If it be good, its properties are virtue (*dharma*), knowledge, calm self-control, and supernatural power, called *aiswarya*. The last-mentioned property enables a man to make his way into a solid rock, to sail to the sun on a sunbeam, touch the moon with the tip of his finger, expand so as to occupy all space, and swim, dive, or float upon the earth as readily as in water: through goodness, in fact, the Intellect (Buddhi) attains the "absolute subjugation of Nature," so that "whatever the will proposes, that it obtains."* The other chief product of Nature is Egotism; "but," says Dr. Ballantyne,† "egotism, thus employed, is not to carry with it the familiar import of bustling vanity," for one who would escape

* Wilson's 'Sankhya Karika.'

† Lecture on the Sankhya Philosophy, No. 52; Benares, 1850.

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the charge of *ahan-kara* (egotism) is not merely to avoid talking about himself, but must not even distinguish himself from other things, or other things from himself. Self-consciousness is the organ by which the impression of individuality is conveyed to the soul; it produces the senses and all ideas conveyed by the senses, and so far resembles the *Ego*, or I, of Fichte. But here Dr. Ballantyne remarks a "striking difference between the European and the Oriental theory," for, whilst European philosophers assume self-consciousness as the certain indication of soul, Kapila declares it to be no property of soul, and to be regarded such only through delusion. Fichte calls what is outside ourselves *real* only, inasmuch as out of it arises duty and the feeling of 'Thou shalt;' whereas with Kapila the distinctness of Soul from Nature is a "radical fact." Fichte excluded a twofold nature, because it rendered unity of exposition, and consequently all philosophy, impossible;* Kapila looked upon soul as the unchangeable, ultimate reality, which can only be perceived when the transitory is destroyed. Hindu philosophers describe it by negations, and it appears therefore cold, inert, and lifeless; but from the intensity with which these idealists yearned to cast away illusory existence, we may suppose that they felt as the poet, who speaks of the marvels of night, to which sunshine makes us blind, and then sublimely indicates the greater glories hidden from us by life:†

> "Why do we then shun death with anxious strife?
> If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life?"

Kapila's doctrine however was cold and rigid; he makes the soul a passive, unimpressible spectator of joy, sorrow,

* Ballantyne, Lecture on the Sankhya Philosophy. † Blanco White.

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duty, power, and knowledge, and, clothed in subtile matter, it extends "over the space of the heart the size of a finger," or, "invested in subtile matter," it hovers over a man like "the flame of a lamp over its wick."* Thus, where Yama expounds to Nachiketa the nature of the soul, he says that it "resides within that space of the human heart which is as large as a finger," and he directs him by firmness of mind to separate it from his body, "in the same manner as the pith is removed from the plant *manju*."† So also in the story of Savitri, told in the preceding Chapter, Yama comes to Satyavan with a noose in his hand, and, forcing out the vital being as it were a finger's length, bound it in his cord.‡ When the spirit, "big as the thumb,"§ has quitted the body, pain ceases, and therefore the great business of life is to acquire immunity from further lives and transmigrations. Self-consciousness and its associates must learn the nothingness of phenomena; then Soul becomes satisfied and allows Nature to repose; by which is meant, that for such a man finite existence is no longer necessary, and he is therefore permitted to shrink to the small dimensions of his "subtile body," and, departing through "the hundred and first tube," proceeding from the heart, he acquires emancipation or absorption.||

This school represents the first division of the Sankhya system; the second division is that of Kapila's pupil, Patanjali, who teaches Yoga¶ (concentration) as a *means* whereby to "cast off ignorance." The pupil is desired to

* Colebrooke, vol. i. p. 246.
† Katha Upanishad.
‡ Griffith's Indian Poetry, p. 27.
§ Wilson's 'Sankhya Karika.'
|| Katha Upanishad.
¶ From *yuj*, to keep the mind fixed in abstract meditation.

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fix his attention upon that description of soul which is called *Iswara;* this word, translated *Lord,* means a person possessing power, and is a term used to any one in office; but, like our own word Lord, it also designates Divinity, and in sacred writings we shall find it usually preceded by the sacred syllable *Om.* Patanjali's Yoga school was therefore looked upon as theistic, whilst Kapila's was considered atheistic: but it is not theistic in a very satisfactory sense, for Iswara, the Lord, instead of being the *end* of devotion, is a means assisting the devotee to accomplish that intense meditation which is "without a seed" (securing the body from reproduction): then, the soul is "alone, pure, emancipated."* Yoga seems to have suited Hindus better than active virtue, for we find it adopted by all sects from the time of the Upanishads down to the present day, when Yogis are seen standing or sitting in fixed positions, wrapt in abstraction.

The second system of philosophy is the Nyaya. The first division treats upon Physics, the second upon Metaphysics: the first is called *Vaiseshika,* Particular; the second *Nyaya,* Reasoning.† The physical division claims Kánáda as its author, and teaches the doctrine of Atoms; but the theory is greatly superior to that of Democritus, because the atoms are conceived as units of matter without extent, and merely occupy a subordinate place in the research.‡ It is curious to find *ether* mentioned in this treatise as a substance which, equally with time, place, and soul, is pervading and infinite; even in the Upanishads,

* Ballantyne, p. 28; Aphorisms of the Yoga, p. 60.

† Colebrooke, vol. i. p. 261.

‡ Bibliotheca Indica, Dr. Roer, August, 1850.

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which are earlier than the Schools, *ether*, together with air, fire, water, earth, is represented as an element. Elements are substance, and the schools differ in their opinion upon substance, but all agree in distinguishing substance from its qualities, and, like Bishop Berkeley, they make the reality of substance to depend upon its qualities as perceived by mind.

In the Nyaya system a man must possess *dharma*, and also knowledge of substances, qualities, etc. But although professing to embrace the universe, this system neglects in fact all that forms the subject-matter of the physical sciences, and Hindu philosophers look down in consequence with self-complacent superiority upon those who devote themselves to physical or practical science.* But whilst weak in physics, the Nyaya is strong in dialectics, leading Dr. Roer to remark, that "the philosophical researches of the Hindus are as worthy of attention as those of the Greeks." He allows that they are less easy to be understood by foreigners, owing to their neglect of analysis; but this fault, he says, they share with many other teachers of philosophy, including even Spinoza. "The Hindus are dogmatical: they commence synthetically with a statement of their principles, but do not condescend to unfold the train of thought which has led to them." Consequently "the same doctrines which might have been instrumental in enlightening thousands are now forgotten, or in the possession of a few who are hardly able to comprehend them."† But whatever the deficiencies of the Nyaya, it must have

* Synopsis of Science, Benares, 1852, advertisement ix.

† Introduction to Nyaya Philosophy, Bibliotheca Indica, Calcutta, August, 1850.

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great intrinsic merit; for, in constructing a Synopsis for the Benares College, Dr. Ballantyne has made it his "standpoint." He was reflecting upon Hindu notions regarding induction, when he received a letter from Professor Wilson, suggesting that a translation of the section on inference in the Nyaya would be very acceptable to the logicians of Europe. Dr. Ballantyne examined the work in consequence, and was surprised at the resemblance which he found "between the turn of thought and expression in the writer, and in Mr. John Stuart Mill's work on Logic," which was a work Dr. Ballantyne was already using with good prospect of advantage in his college classes.*

The third system is the Vedanta: its first division, the "Purva Mimansa," is attributed to Jaimini, it is strong in praise of *dharma* (virtue); but the system is better known by the second division, the "Uttara Mimansa," taught by Badayarana (commonly called Vyasa).† This system was promulgated for the purpose of correcting the materialism of its precursors. The Sankhya says, that Nature, distinct from Soul, produced the universe: the Vedanta denies this, and declares Brahme (primordial soul) to be the only axis, centre, root, or origin of the phenomena. The Sankhya recognizes two powers,—inactive Soul and active Nature: the Vedanta calls this dualism; and asserts, that nature or matter, and all consequent phenomena, are necessary attributes of Brahme. The Veda, as *Sruti*, that which has been heard, is appealed to in confirmation of this assertion; by Veda being here meant some of the Upanishads. When the Veda says That, or the Self-existent, it

* Ballantyne, Synopsis, advt. xxvi.

† Lecture on the Vedanta, Benares, 1851.

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means Brahme, and not Nature. When the Veda says that embodied souls acquire absorption, it means absorption into Brahme, not into Nature; otherwise there would be this absurd contradiction, that the intelligent would become absorbed into the unintelligent. And again, when the Veda speaks of "The One that consists of joy," it means Brahme; in support of which Panini is quoted.* "That which is within the Sun and the eye," "breath of life," and "light," also mean Brahme; and this is made evident by the holy verse called Gayatri.† So much is taught in what are called the "Vedanta Sutras," or "Brahma Sutras;" *sutra* being a word for thread, often used as synonymous with Aphorism. On one occasion the editor of a book of Aphorisms says, "Like that funambulist, the spider, which runs on a *thread*," so he relies upon the *sutras* (threads), and not upon commentaries.‡

For a further development of Vedanta doctrine we turn to a Tract called the Vedanta Sara, essence of the Vedanta. It starts from the point that Brahme is the Eternal Universal Soul, and proceeds to show man's relation towards Brahme. Human souls are a portion of the Universal Soul, "deposited in a succession of sheaths, enveloping one another like the coats of an onion;" and the aim of life must be to free the soul from these encumberments. This is to be done by knowledge, or by learning that Buddhi (intellect) and all human faculties are ignorance and delusion: Bud-

* Amongst Dr. Ballantyne's valuable works at Benares, Professor Wilson refers to his "publication of this great source of all Sanskrit grammar," the Maha Bhashya, or great Commentary on the Aphorisms of Panini.—Lecture on Oriental Literature, Jan. 1852, J. R. A. S., vol. xiii., part 2.

† Translations of this Address to Light are given in Chapter I., *ante*.

‡ The Aphorisms of the Vaiseshika, Benares, 1851.

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dhi (intellect) takes the chief part in this, divesting itself of its enveloping sheaths, and then discriminating that "all is God only."* All that is not Brahme it perceives to be ignorance, and ignorance is nothing; therefore the act of the understanding, which rightly recognizes the "Indivisible" (Brahme), is itself a nonentity, and disappears in the act of recognition. The consequence is that man has no individuality; for so long as he perceives his own existence he is in "ignorance." The removal of ignorance is like the removal of a mirror in which a countenance was reflected; remove the mirror and nothing remains but the countenance, or Brahme. And thus, Dr. Ballantyne observes, when a man, with all his wits, is wide awake, he is furthest removed from the state in which he ought to be; but when he falls asleep and dreams, he shuffles off the outermost coil of his ignorance.† In proportion as he succeeds in casting this off, he becomes convinced that nothing exists besides the "Indivisible" (Brahme); and that inasmuch as he exists, he himself is the "Indivisible." Finally, he must "get rid of the habit of making even himself a habit of thought; there must be *no* object: the subject alone must remain,—a thought, a joy, an existence,—and the only one." The Tract concludes by directing the worshipper towards means for the attainment of this end. Amongst these is the meditation called *Samádhi;* the contemplation called *Dhyana;* the postures spoken of as *padma* and *svastika*, and suppressions of the breath.

We have now reviewed the three great systems,—1. The Sankhya, which recognizes soul as Purusha, but derives the universe from Nature; 2. The Nyaya, which holds similar

* Vedanta Sara, Benares. † *Ibid.*, p. 82.

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doctrine, but is chiefly noted for its logic; and lastly, the Vedanta, which denies duality, allows no independent power to Nature, and declares Brahme, the supreme Soul, to be the only true existence. The Sankhya was undoubtedly the earliest of these systems, but it is impossible to fix on a precise date for either of them. Hindu philosophers disregarded dates on principle: their idea of philosophy is observed by Dr. Roer to be something "raised above change,"* unconnected therefore with the state of society or the particular time in which it was first promulgated; and consequently we find the teachings of successive centuries hopelessly intertwined. Philosophers made their discourses orally, and if eminent, their statements were written down in Sutras, or aphorisms. These were too concise to be intelligible without explanation, and in consequence we gather our ideas of Upanishads, written it may be B.C. 800, and Sutras, written B.C. 600, from commentators of subsequent centuries. A rude outline is therefore all that can be attempted in the chronology of Hindu philosophy. In the hymns of the Rig-Veda, men are supposed to become superhuman by dint of penance and rites; and the existence of Universal Soul is alluded to. The Upanishads develope the doctrine of soul, and teach that knowledge of soul emancipates from transmigration. In the Sankhya system nature is interposed between man and soul; the Nyaya follows the Sankhya, and then, after an interval, the Vedanta system endeavours to bring back belief in soul as Brahme, to correct the tendency to materialism given by the Sankhya system. The Code of Manu seems conversant both with the Upanishads and the Aphorisms; for it frequently recom-

* Bibliotheca Indica, August, 1850.

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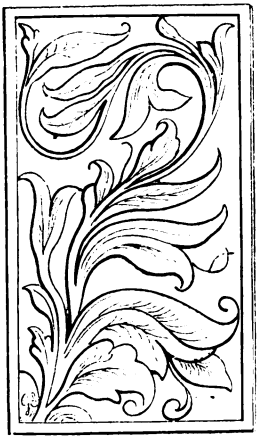
mends suppressions of the breath, makes use of the sacred triliteral syllable *Om* (explained in the Yoga Aphorisms as *Iswara*, the Lord), and objects, like the Vedanta, to duality. To exchange the perishable for the eternal is equally the aim of all philosophers; but whilst the Sankhyas believe phenomena to be a product of nature, Vedantists look upon "the phenomenal world as the garb or vesture of God." The garb is however inseparable, and the Brahme which it invests is inactive; and this school also was in consequence wholly without belief in God as a creative, governing, almighty Will. In each system the most ambitious reasoner is obviously the worst theologian. In the first and second, belief in Brahme is extinguished by the argument that reality depends upon "perceiving intellect;" and in the third, Brahme being assumed to be the only real existence, it is argued that man's intellect is but a portion of Brahme, and that man is in a delusion so long as he perceives within himself a separate identity.



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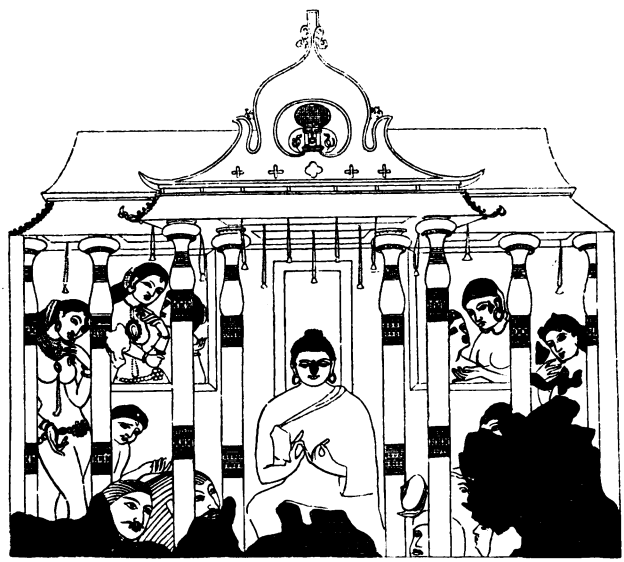
BOOK II.

INDIA AFTER THE PERIOD OF ALEXANDER.

Buddhism.



"Pour quelques personnes toutes les questions relatives au Buddhisme étaient déjà décidées quand on n'avait pas encore lu une seule ligne.... Pour les uns le Buddhisme était un vénérable culte, né dans l'Asie centrale, et dont l'origine se perdait dans la nuit des temps; pour les autres c'était une misérable contrefaçon du Nestorianisme; on avait fait de Buddha un Nègre, parce qu'il avait les cheveux crépus; un Mongol, parce qu'il avait les yeux obliques; un Scythe, parce qu'il se nommait Sakhya. On en avait même fait un planète, et je ne sais pas si quelques savants ne se plaisent pas encore aujourd'hui à retrouver ce sage paisible sous les traits du belliqueux Odin. Certes il est permis d'hésiter, quand à ces solutions si vastes on ne promet de substituer que des doutes ou que des explications simples et presque vulgaires."—BURNOUF, *L'Histoire du Buddhisme Indien.*

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CHAPTER I.

"How beautiful was Greece!—how marvellous
In polity, and chasten'd grace severe!"—ALFORD.

HERE let us pause. The scroll of ancient India's history lies unrolled before us, partly deciphered. It bears no dates and chronicles, no dynasties; but it records generous thought and feeling, poetry, philosophy, religious aspiration, and such progress in judicature, arts, manufactures, and even sciences, that we feel almost justified in our juvenile enthusiasm for the affluent East.

The Vedic period, commencing about B.C. 1400, forms as it were an antique rustic porch leading to the fine old temple of Brahmanical grandeur. In the porch we find kings and priests standing side by side. One hymn is written by a king and another by a Brahman; and one son of a king succeeds to the throne, whilst another becomes a Brahman. But when we pass into the period of Brahmanical grandeur, we perceive Brahmans standing aloof, whilst kings,

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soldiers, and the multitude pay them homage. By degrees the priesthood became hereditary, and only one or two instances are there recorded in which kings, by force of penance, succeeded in obtaining Brahmanical rank. The less learned and less wealthy of the Brahman Caste perform the public offices of religion, whilst those of higher rank and superior attainments spend their lives in learned ease and literature, or else in teaching pupils, or in assisting the counsels of royalty and administering justice.

Brahmans, as a class or caste, were entitled to a provision from the public funds for their life, and to facilities for obtaining happy transmigration, or still happier emancipation in the life to come; other Castes had no power of attaining these blessings without the aid of Brahmans, and it was against the law for Brahmans to give their aid to any but those whose birth entitled them to investiture with the sacrificial thread. It was long before any disadvantage was discovered in this exclusive system. At first it seemed natural, and merely involved that those who were best qualified should guide the rest; and however great and dangerous the faults and errors, we nevertheless find the era in which Brahmans first attained supremacy to have been a period of singular richness and prosperity. The general literature probably commenced about B.C. 700; the Brahmanas, with the Upanishads and philosophic Sutras, being followed by the Laws of Manu, and these succeeded by the heroic poems. This is a literature which Ward, the missionary, exceedingly condemns, which Sir William Jones enthusiastically commends, and of which Mr. Elphinstone says, referring to the poems, "their beauties have been most felt by those whose own productions entitle their judg-

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ment to most respect."* Judging of it through translations we find faults indeed of every description, but redeemed by a light, which glows at times as if it were a reflection from primeval revelation, and which, lingering like a summer sunset, is seen athwart the rising clouds of selfish superstition and dead formalism.

The ancient Hindus excelled in all that could be attained by contemplation; and thus in grammar, logic, astronomy, and medicine, they appear to have been in advance of contemporary nations. But their language, now so celebrated, did not attain its perfection until the age of Pericles and Demosthenes had already passed. And their wonderful rock-cut temples, Dagobas, and columns belong to a later period than that which we have been studying; the Parthenon and Temple of Theseus having been for centuries enthroned upon the rocks of Athens, before the caves of Ellora and Elephanta were excavated from the rocks of Western India.

During this first Brahmanical period of Hindu history, we can detect no foreign influence; and we find but slight or doubtful recognition of India in foreign chronicles. We believe indeed that Solomon's apes and peacocks, ivory and almug-wood, came from India; and we know by the hymns of the Rig-Veda that merchants at that early period had ships "crowding the ocean;" but we do not know whether they went beyond the Malabar coast; we do not know whether Hindus ever visited the Holy Land, or whether those cunning workmen who carved in wood and overlaid pillars with gold for King Solomon, ever found their way to India. We must not indeed forget that Hindus were them-

* History of India, p. 155.

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selves a foreign element in India, coming from the central nursery of Aryans, and bringing with them the Sanskrit language, and many religious ideas and customs, some of which they had held in common with the more or less civilized ancestors of the Persians, and their nomadic neighbours the Scythians. Professor Lassen calls them "Sanskrit people," after their language, whilst Benfey designates them *Aryans*, after their race; but the simpler term Hindu will serve our purpose, and will signify the people who at first drove chariots and loved horses, and worshipped Indra down the course of the Indus; who afterwards studied philosophy and improvised poetry within sight of the Himalaya; who founded cities under Brahmanical guidance through out the length and breadth of the Gangetic plains, and who lived almost wholly undisturbed and uninfluenced by foreign nations until the arrival of the Greeks. Not that a positive opinion can be pronounced upon the question; but as the commercial intercourse is supposed to have been indirect, and as the expeditions of Bacchus and Semiramis to India are reputed fabulous, and as Cyrus never went beyond the Punjab, and soon lost again what he conquered there, it is not until the time of Darius that we meet with any well authenticated foreign invasion. Darius Hystaspes produced but very slight effect on India, but his campaigns deserve attention; for he aimed at something more than conquest, and endeavoured, by studying the customs of new territories, to attach them to his government. He conquered eastern Kabul, the Punjab, and part of Sindh. It is mentioned that a great variety of Indians came to his court, and that with the fair-complexioned he could converse, but that with the dark-coloured he required an

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interpreter.* Darius distributed the Persian empire into twenty satrapies, one of which was India. The nineteen other satrapies paid tribute "in silver according to the Babylonian or larger talent," the sum from the whole nineteen amounting to about £2,964,000 sterling; "from the Indians, who alone paid in gold, there was received a sum equal to about £1,290,000 sterling," a sum equal to two-fifths of that received from the other nineteen. This statement is supposed to prove that northern India was at that time very rich in gold.† Darius did not himself go beyond the Punjab, but by his direction the navigation of the Indus was explored; and under his orders, Skylax, a Greek from the south coast of Asia Minor, sailed down its stream into the Indian Ocean round the peninsula of Arabia and up the Red Sea to Egypt.‡ This happened about B.C. 500, and almost immediately afterwards commenced that series of events which ended by bringing the Greeks to India.

The Ionians were a Greek colony settled in Asia, and had long paid tribute to Persia, but they still felt drawn towards their mother country; and when a quarrel arose between them and their Persian superiors, it was Greece they sued for succour. Athens at once sent twenty ships; whereupon the Ionians grew confident, and in the year B.C. 499 dared to take possession of the city of Sardis. This was in itself an act meriting punishment from the great King Darius; but the case was soon rendered more desperate by the folly

* Lassen, Indische Alterthumskunde, vol. ii. pp. 112, 114. Indians are again mentioned in the army with which Xerxes invaded Greece.

† See Grote's History of Greece, vol. iv. p. 315.

‡ Grote's History of Greece, vol. iv. p. 300.

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of an Ionian soldier, who set fire to a house, and the city, being built of wood, was in consequence reduced to ashes. When Darius learned that not only Sardis was burned, but that the Athenians were assisting the revolt, he determined upon immediate vengeance against the Greeks. He collected his troops, and made preparations in his usual magnificent style; but Aristides, Themistocles, and Miltiades were then the strength of Athens; and although Darius readily reduced the islands in the Ægean Sea, his generals no sooner fought on Attic ground than the Persian warriors were defeated in the celebrated battle of Marathon, B.C. 490. Five years later Darius died, but Persia continued her attacks on Greece until B.C. 334, when, during the reign of Darius Codomannus, Alexander the Great took the initiative, and carried his troops into the heart of Asia. This great undertaking was not merely warlike, but stands on record as the first scientific expedition ever made.* Alexander was accompanied by naturalists, surveyors, historians, philosophers, artists, and poets, and was urged forward not merely by selfish ambition or an irresistible thirst for conquest, but by a desire to bring distant nations into friendly relations; and he imagined Greek influence capable of drawing the whole of Asia within a magic ring. He gave therefore Greek municipal institutions to his Macedonian colonies, and established so vigorous a system of international policy between Greece and Asia that it was only effaced by the religion and conquests of Mohammed and the Arabs.†

Enough of foreign influence is perceptible in India, after this epoch, to make it desirable that we should attend

* Lassen, vol. ii. p. 116. † Finlay, Greece under the Romans.

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closely to the movements of Alexander and his followers previous to their entering India; for even if no arts or legends can positively be ascribed to Greece, Syria, Babylonia, or Scythia, we shall be able to conjecture with more satisfaction on the Ninevite character of Buddhist architecture and a few other Buddhist mysteries, if we have touched previously upon the principal points of the great Alexander's campaigns. The Hellespont was crossed in March, B.C. 334, two years spent in successful battles and marches throughout Asia Minor, Damascus taken, several towns of Phœnicia subdued, and the celebrated siege of Tyre commenced, on the pretext of requiring to worship the Sun-god Melkart, identified with Hercules. After seven months' severe struggle, Tyre was taken and the sacrifice performed. Alexander then, accepting the submission of the Jews, marched into Egypt, where he sacrificed to the local Gods, and founded the city of Alexandria; he then crossed the Libyan Desert, to consult the oracle of Jupiter Ammon, in imitation of his reputed ancestors, Perseus and Hercules; the oracle assured him that his career would be one of uninterrupted victory.* His next campaign in Asia was distinguished by the decisive battle of Arbela, after which both Babylon and Susa surrendered.† Babylon he entered in triumph, rested during thirty-four days, conversed with Chaldæans, and made sacrifice to Belus; he then went to Susa, where he received a large reinforcement of about fifteen thousand men—Macedonians, Greeks, and Thracians,

* Grote, vol. xii. p. 190; Arrian, p. 64.

† On this occasion the distinguished historian of Greece observes :—"As far as we can follow the dispositions of Alexander, they appear the most signal example recorded in antiquity of military genius and sagacious combination" (vol. xii. p. 228).

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both cavalry and infantry, and "fifty Macedonian youths of noble family, soliciting admission into Alexander's corps of pages." He then went to Persepolis, where he bears the odium of setting fire to the magnificent palace of Xerxes. But we will hope that on this and on many other occasions Alexander might justly complain of his historians,—that the Greeks were jealous, that the Macedonians could not write, and that, in the words of Mr. Prinsep, "the only justice done to him is in the affix of the title 'Great,' which his name will carry with it to all times."*

In the year B.C. 330 a traitorous conspiracy was formed against Darius, who had escaped from the Macedonians, and he fell eventually by the hands of Bessus, one of his own officers. Far from hailing this event with joy, Alexander was enraged at its baseness, and abandoned all other schemes in order to pursue the traitor: this led him a second time to Bactria, "the battle-field of every tribe and nation that has risen to dominion in the East;" and in August or September of this year, he founded the still famous city of Herat.† He then passed through a country in which his troops "suffered exceedingly from want, snow, and cold;" this being the hill-route from Herat, where the British troops were so much distressed by cold in January, 1841. The winter was passed at "Alexandria apud Caucasum," supposed to be Beghram, thirty or forty miles to the north of Kabul.‡ In the spring, B.C. 329, Alexander recrossed the mountains and pursued the traitor Bessus

* Hist. Results, H. T. Prinsep, pp. 3, 4.

† The site of Alexandria is not precisely determined. See Hist. Results, p. 15; Wilson's Ariana, p. 180.

‡ *Ibid.*, or Hist. Results, p. 15.

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beyond the river Oxus: he was now in a country of Scythians, of whom Spitamenes was king or chief, and here, at Nautika, Bessus was captured. Alexander was too wise a General to advance amongst these unknown and quick-moving tribes without precautions, and whilst he sent forward exploring parties he often remained himself with his main force, establishing colonies and well-garrisoned towns fitted to secure a safe retreat. The wild chief, Spitamenes, soon justified his prudence; for although he had refused to protect Bessus, neither would he submit to be conquered, and no sooner had Alexander gone through the country and gained a battle on the northern banks of the Jaxartes, than Spitamenes fell upon his rear and endeavoured to possess himself of Samarcand; but the Greek garrison was firm, and he only succeeded in cutting off some troops sent as a reinforcement.

It was at this period that the twenty Scythian ambassadors waited upon Alexander and made the speech which may be still admired, whether we attribute it to the Scythians or to their historian, Quintus Curtius. "You," say they, "who boast of coming to exterminate robbers, are yourself the greatest robber in the world, for you have plundered all the nations you have subdued. Are not even those who live in woods to be exempted from knowing you and from feeling your violence? If you are a god, you should do good to mankind; if you are a man, you ought to hearken to the dictates of reason and humanity." Some places are mentioned in these campaigns which cannot confidently be identified; but it seems probable that, at the close of the year, he recrossed the river Oxus, and spent the winter B.C. 329–328 in cantonments at Hazarasp, and that whilst there he

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received a mission from the banks of the Volga.* Early in the spring, he took the field in five divisions, and overran the whole country north and east of Kabul. Spitamenes was subdued and slain; but by another mountain tribe, also called Scythians, Alexander was received with respect and magnificence, and in consequence fell in love with the King's daughter, Roxana, and made her his wife. The Greek kingdom of Bactria comprehended both divisions of Scythians, and the chiefs of mountain tribes in that quarter still claim to be descended from Iskander, meaning Alexander, "a tradition," observes Professor Wilson, "which singularly preserves the memory of a time when these countries were subject to princes sprung from the countrymen of the Macedonian conqueror."† Alexander spent altogether three years in Bactria, and the Greek power being now firmly established, he turned his attention towards India, a country he had long desired to reach and to possess; but he would have deemed a march into the Punjab unsafe, if not impracticable, had not Bactria been first subdued, "so as to prevent Bessus and the Scythians from breaking in upon the line of communication with Media and Greece."‡

In the spring of B.C. 327 the Kabul valley was reduced, and heralds sent to call upon the kings of the neighbouring districts to submit. The most important result of this proceeding was, that Mophis of Taxila (thence called Taxiles)

* Prinsep, Hist. Results, p. 17.

† Wilson's Ariana, p. 169. The assertion is made by travellers of various periods, from Marco Polo down to Mr. Elphinstone and Sir A. Burnes.

‡ Prinsep, Hist. Results, p. 12.

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became an important ally, and conducted Alexander's Generals, Hephæstion and Perdiccas, along the southern bank of the river Kophen, through Jellalabad, to Attok on the Indus. Alexander himself went through the Kaiber Pass, and crossed the Indus, in April, B.C. 327, on a bridge of boats, which he found prepared for him by Hephæstion and Taxiles. The most interesting event of this year was the encounter between Alexander and Porus, a king or chief upon the river Jhilum: he appears to have held but a small territory, but his bravery, shown equally in battle and defeat, has made Porus the favourite of all historians.* Alexander at once restored his lands, only claiming certain services and tribute, and these two kings, Taxiles and Porus, continued his allies till death.

Whilst Alexander was still in the Punjab, his followers were seized with an invincible home-sickness; "they complained that they found their King always attempting one toil after another, and plunging himself and them into new hazards after he had got clear of the old ones:"† and nothing appears to have made them more impatient than the long-continued heavy rain of the periodical rainy season. When news of the discontent reached head-quarters, Alexander called a council and made a speech, but all without avail, and, ardently as he desired to press forwards to the Ganges, he was sadly compelled to yield to the clamour for returning home. Although deeply mortified, he made his preparations with characteristic energy, and his shipwrights were at once instructed to construct a fleet.

* Droysen has given details of this battle with much picturesque effect. See Lassen, vol. ii. p. 117.

† Arrian's Hist. Alex. Ex., p. 146.

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But first he ordered twelve altars to be erected, equal in height to so many fortified towns, and on these he offered sacrifices to the Gods, giving thanks for his past victories, and concluding the ceremonies with a celebration of gymnastic and equestrian games.*

Whilst the ships were building, Alexander made incursions into the neighbouring states, of which many little circumstances are related. Some states were republics, in which Brahmans were not honoured, and where the women's manners were "Bacchanalian:" one nation, called Kathæans, is noted for choosing their chief or king for his personal beauty, and for destroying all weakly children: these people are supposed to spring from Kshatriya women who had married Sudras. A king named Sopeithes, in the south of Sindh, presented Alexander with hunting dogs, for which the country is famous; and another brought a precious offering of three hundred pounds of wootz, or Indian steel. One single town of Brahmans is recorded, and they are said to have been most hostile to Alexander, as a king of barbarians and heretics.

At length all things were ready for the voyage, and much is said by Strabo and Arrian of the sacrifices to the Gods and libations to the rivers with which it was commenced. Arrian describes the great order which was observed; the ships moving on a signal given by sound of trumpet, the store-ships required to keep at a certain distance from the ships which carried horses, "and these from the ships of war, lest, if they proceeded without due order, they should be dashed one against another; nor were the best sailers suffered to go out of their ranks, nor the slowest to lag

* Arrian, p. 151. † Lassen, ii. 157.

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behind: it was wonderful," continues Arrian, "to hear the clashing of the oars of such a mighty number of ships at the same instant, as also the shouts of the rowers, and the commands of their officers, which the banks, often higher than the ships themselves, and the thick woods on each side of the river, so increased by compression and repercussion" that the inhabitants (politely called by Arrian "barbarians") were struck with amazement, and their wonder was increased by seeing horses embarked on board a fleet. On the fifth day they arrived at the junction of the Hydaspes and Ascesines, where, the banks being close and the channel narrow, the current is extremely rapid, causing prodigious eddies, and a loud noise heard at a vast distance. When they escaped from these straits they took refuge in a sort of bay, where the ships were all gathered together to be refitted.*

When the voyage was resumed, the King of Patala sent to offer submission and allegiance, and at Patala the Macedonians made a long and peaceful halt; but exactly where the place is situated is a question which has occasioned many learned pages of discussion. Professor Wilson gives excellent reasons why Patala was not Tatta, but more probably to the north of Haiderabad, but thinks we need not look for a perfect identification, because "the channels of the lower part of the Indus are perpetually shifting, and it may be doubted if any one of them now follows precisely the same direction that it took when the vessels of Alexander floated down the stream." The name our Professor thinks undoubtedly Indian, and probably derived from *Potálaya* or *Potálá*, a harbour, and he observes that the

* Arrian, book vi. ch. 3, 4.

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name Potala, harbour, is given in Buddhist writings to a city in the delta of the Indus, in which the Sakyas are said to have lived before their migration to Kapila-vastu,* in Rohilcund.

Whilst the fleet reposed at Patala, occasional expeditions were made into the surrounding country, which is generally described as peaceful and prosperous, occupied by an agricultural population, governed by kings and Brahmans. It was in one of these expeditions that Alexander first beheld the ocean; he and his Greek and Macedonian companions had seen no sea except the Mediterranean, in which there are no tides, and their surprise at beholding this phenomenon is amusingly described by Arrian. They sailed down the Indus from Patala in light ships, and "when they arrived at the place where it is full two hundred furlongs wide, namely at its mouth, the wind blowing hard from the sea and the waves rising so high as to hinder them from managing their oars, they again put into a certain bay, which their pilots showed them, for shelter. While they continued in that situation, an accident happened which astonished them, namely the ebbing and flowing of the waters, like as in the great ocean, insomuch that the ships were left upon dry ground, which Alexander and his friends having never perceived before were so much the more surprised at: but what increased their astonishment was that the tide, returning a short while after, began to heave the ships up, so that those which stuck in the mud were raised gently and set afloat again, without receiving any damage."†

* Wilson's Ariana, p. 211, and J. A. S. B., August, 1833; Origin of Sakya Race, Csoma Korösi.

† Arrian, book vi. ch. 18, 19.

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Alexander explored the mouths of the Indus, founded one or more seaports, returned to Patala, and, leaving Nearchus to command the fleet, set forth upon his homeward route. His orders were, that Nearchus should sail in the north-west monsoon, *i.e.* in November or December; but no sooner had the great conqueror departed than the inhabitants rose against the foreign force, and Nearchus deemed it prudent to wait no longer than the 9th of September, B.C. 326, although the south-west wind was still prevailing. Arrian marks the line of country through which Alexander started by describing the plants peculiar to it. In the deserts of the Gedrosi, he tells us, are myrrh-trees taller than elsewhere; also trees growing where the tide flows among them thirty cubits in height, with leaves like the laurel and white flowers sweeter than violets; and another plant, which produces strong prickles and has a thick juice more acrid than the fig.*

Whilst Alexander was in Karmania, news reached him that one of the Satraps whom he had left in the Punjab had been murdered by his paid soldiery: his commands on the occasion were, that Eudemos and Taxiles should take the management of affairs until he should send another Satrap, thus showing that Taxiles, the Hindu chief, continued to enjoy his confidence. Porus is also mentioned from time to time as receiving accessions of territory from Alexander; probably also Porus may have occasionally taken the territories of refractory chieftains upon his own responsibility, for after the lapse of four or five years we find his dominions reaching to the mouth of the Indus.

* These three plants are identified by the late Dr. Stocks as growing within twenty or thirty miles of Kurrachee. See letter from Dr. Stocks to Dr. Royle, read to the Philosophical Club of the Royal Society in 1850.

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Alexander died in the spring of B.C. 323, and then commenced ceaseless wars amongst his Satraps. Eumenes, of Cappadocia, defeated and slew Craterus B.C. 322; Antigonous took the field against Eumenes B.C. 320, and whilst war was fiercely carried on amongst the rival Greeks, India shared in the general agitation. For ten years the Greeks held dominion in the Punjab; but in B.C. 317 Eudemos caused Porus to be assassinated, and then marched into Bactria, carrying with him one hundred and twenty elephants which had belonged to the Hindu king. This ignoble murder of their greatest Raja exasperated the people of the Indus, and gave a favourable opening for the schemes of a Hindu adventurer, whom the Greeks call Sandracottus. This young man was connected with the reigning royal family at Patna, but there was no place upon the throne for him, and he wandered about ready to take advantage of any tumult. The Greeks mention his having once visited the Court of Alexander, and say, that after the murder of Porus he fought his way from one territory to another until he acquired not only the lands of Porus, but also the kingdom of Patna, and acquired so much importance and stability that, when Seleucus came to restore order, he risked but one engagement with Sandracottus, and then judged it desirable to make peace, accepting elephants, and giving in return, some say, his daughter in marriage.* After this Seleucus

* This seems to be an inference from an expression in Strabo, who says that Seleucus received from Sandracottus fifty elephants and "contractâ cum eo affinitate." See Preface to the Drama of Mudra Rakshasa, by Professor Wilson, where it is observed that Seleucus relinquished territories beyond the Indus, and is said to have formed a matrimonial alliance with Sandracottus: "we have no trace of this in Hindu writers, but it is not at all improbable."—Hindu Theatre, vol. ii. p. 134.

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sent a Greek named Megasthenes to reside at Patna, as his representative or *chargé d'affaires*, and chiefly through the accounts of Megasthenes do we learn what the Greeks observed and thought of India at the date of 280 years before our era. Megasthenes wrote full descriptions, but unfortunately only fragments have been preserved, and these are chiefly met with in the works of Strabo. Arrian follows Megasthenes and Nearchus, calling them "two famous well-approved authors," and in addition to these we have the general descriptions of the observing Herodotus. These writers speak of Hindu costume as just what we see it in the present day, consisting of two garments, one of which reaches to the middle of the leg and the other covering part of the head and shoulders: these dresses were sometimes of bright colours and flowered patterns; their slippers were ornamented, and various ornaments of gold and jewels were worn, earrings being particularly mentioned. Dyeing the eyebrows with henna is a practice alluded to in the Code, but the Greeks tell of beards dyed with henna and indigo, "insomuch that some of them appear white, others black, some red, some purple, and others green." This is stated on the authority of Nearchus, and is accounted for by Mr. Elphinstone on the supposition that mistakes in the mixture, or time of application, had the same effect then as in modern days.* Great people had umbrellas carried over them when they walked, but are represented as also riding in chariots which were drawn by horses in war and by oxen during a march, and on state occasions they rode on richly caparisoned elephants. Arrian's† account of the catching and training of elephants is so graphic and true to the pre-

* History of India, p. 244.

† Arrian, ch. xvi.

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sent mode, that it might have been written for the 'Asiatic Researches.' The account which Herodotus gives of ferocious ants would, on the other hand, have a somewhat strange effect in a modern publication; he declares them to be such dangerous creatures, that the bravest men, mounted on the fleetest camels, are sent to seize the gold which these ants dig up. Nearchus mentions the same story, saying that he had never seen one himself, but that many of the soldiers had seen the skins of these ants brought into camp. Ctesias adds, that the Kings of Persia had the ants themselves in their menageries; and Megasthenes accounts for the fact by suggesting that the ants do not dig the gold out of the earth "for the sake of the metal, but to prepare holes wherein to shelter themselves," and ants, in India, "being bigger than foxes" in Greece, "make burrows proportioned to their bulk." All these stories are referred by Professor Wilson to the word *pippilika*, "ant-gold," being the name in common use for lumps of gold collected in the plains of Little Thibet; the name was originally given from a notion that colonies of ants, by clearing away the sand or soil, left the ore exposed, and this was the origin of all the Greek marvels.* The plant which "instead of fruit produces wool, of which the Indians make their clothes," was also striking to the Greeks: Arrian says it is "flax, or rather indeed something much whiter and finer than flax."

The village form of government did not escape Greek notice, for Strabo speaks of places in which the land was cultivated in common by all the inhabitants of a village; and he gives accounts of the measurement of fields, of irrigation, of roads, and of trades as under the superintendence

* Notes on the Sabhá Parva, J. R. A. S. No. xiii. pp. 137, 143.

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of village functionaries. The police was thought excellent, and the Greeks record with admiration that not more than £3 sterling was stolen daily in the camp of Sandracottus. The revenue appears to have been collected on the principle laid down in the Code of Manu, the King's share of produce amounting to about a fourth. Supervisors, or inquisitors, are mentioned by Arrian, "who inquire into all transactions as well in the cities as in the fields," and report to the King if they live under regal government, or to the chief magistrate if in a free city, and "may not be guilty of falsehood; but indeed none of the Indians were ever accused of that crime." Arrian makes particular mention of the division of Caste, and of its being unlawful for the upper ranks "to marry a wife out of his own class;" and none, he says, "are suffered to exercise two distinct trades, or to leave off one and take up another: that is, he may not leave off husbandry and turn shepherd, nor leave off keeping sheep and become an artificer. Only a Sophist is allowed to exercise what employment he pleases; but then their lives are not easy, but vastly laborious."* By Sophists they probably meant *Yogis* and other ascetic and philosophical Brahmans, for they are described as "the most honoured class, exempt from all burdens, and only contributing their prayers to the support of the State." Some asceitcs are described as adopting ostentatious mortifications; and Alexander being curious to see these persons, requested their attendance, but they refused to come, and he then sent Onesicritus, who found fifteen men uncovered and exposed to a burning sun, "some sitting, some standing, some lying, but all remaining immovable from morn-

* Arrian, Ind. Hist., ch. xi.

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ing till evening." Two Sophists are also described by Aristobulus, one young and one old, both Brahmans: he met with them at Taxila. The elder was shaved, the younger wore his hair, and both were followed by disciples. "As they passed through the streets they were received with reverence, people pouring oil of sesamum upon them, and offering them cakes of sesamum and honey. Even when they came to Alexander's table to sup in his company, they gave a lesson of resolution, withdrawing to a neighbouring spot, where the elder lay down exposed to the sun and rain, and the younger stood still all day leaning on a staff." "Other accounts describe ascetics as going about the streets helping themselves to figs and grapes, and to oil for anointing themselves, etc."* These were doubtless devotees of the various Brahmanical schools, the members of which distinguished themselves by particular fashions of tonsure. They are not likely to have been Buddhists, because although Buddhism had commenced it was not publicly honoured; and moreover Buddhists never went unclothed, and did not approve of self-torture. There are more signs of Buddhism about the Indians mentioned by Herodotus, who "put no animal to death, sow no grain, have no fixed habitations, and live solely upon vegetables;" they lived chiefly on a grain the size of millet, "protected by a calyx, the whole of which they baked and ate," by which we understand young cobs of Indian-corn. When "these Indians are sick," he says, "they retire to some solitude and there remain, no one expressing the least concern about them during their illness or after their death."† But this

* Elphinstone, History of India, pp. 236–242.

† Beloe's Herodotus, vol. ii. p. 277.

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description applies equally to Brahmanical ascetics of various schools.

The Greeks mention no temples, palaces, or other large buildings; but, according to Arrian, their towns were too numerous to be reckoned, and very probably as near together as those described by Colonel Edwardes in Sindh. Arrian remarks that towns near the sea or any river were built of wood,* because no buildings of brick would last long; not merely owing to the "violence of the rains, but also of the rivers, which, overflowing their banks, cause an annual inundation over all the flat country; but the cities which are seated on an eminence are frequently built of brick and mortar." He then goes on to speak of Palibothra, the chief city of India, "in the confines of the Prasii, near the confluence of the two great rivers the Erannoboas and the Ganges," which means Patna, near the confluence of the Sone and the Ganges. On the authority of Megasthenes, Palibothra is said to be eight miles long and one and a half broad, "surrounded by a ditch which takes up six acres of ground and is thirty cubits deep; the walls are adorned with five hundred and seventy towers and sixty-four gates." They reckon the length of India "along the road called the King's Road," and they also mention milestones. Numerous conjectures are made concerning the size of India; Ctesias affirming it to be "equal in bigness to all the rest of Asia," whilst Onesicritus thinks it only one-third as large; and Nearchus asserts that the flat country extends to four months' journey. But they

* This mode of building is still adopted on the Indus, where the houses are raised on platforms twelve or thirteen feet from the ground. The houses at Rangoon, on the Irawaddy, are similarly constructed.

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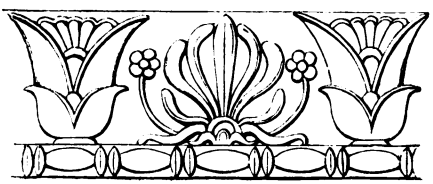
were aware that they knew very little about it; and Arrian says, "even Megasthenes himself seems to me not to have travelled over much of India."* They all agree in calling Palibothra, or Patna, the chief city of the Indians; and Strabo describes the magnificent processions of its festivals in terms which remind us of Alexander's entrance into Babylon :—elephants adorned with gold and silver, chariots with four horses, carriages drawn by oxen, well-appointed troops, gilded vases, tables, thrones, goblets set with emeralds and other precious stones, garments of various colours embroidered in gold, tame lions and panthers, singing birds; also birds remarkable for their plumage, sitting on trees transported on large waggons.†

* Arrian, ch. ii., iii., v.

† Elphinstone, History of India, p. 243.



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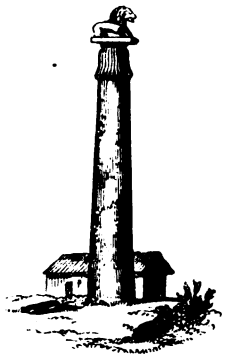

CHAPTER II.

"What eye can trace thy mystic lore,
Lock'd up in characters as dark as night?"—ROGERS.

THE Macedonian invasion adds another scene to our diorama, for we now perceive the armies of Alexander traversing the whole of Asia, gathering followers in Syria, Chaldæa, Scythia, and Bactria, and pouring the heterogeneous multitude into India. From this time forward the historians of the western world may be appealed to for aid in disentangling the perplexed narratives of the East; but there was a hindrance. Hindu Kings had no dates, and the Greek version of their names was not recognizable; consequently it was impracticable to adjust the era of Alexander with that of any Indian potentate. Porus, Taxiles, and Sandracottus had no place in Sanskrit literature, although Strabo and others, who follow Megasthenes, represent the last as the most successful and powerful Raja of the period succeeding Alexander's death.

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He was, they say, a military adventurer, who succeeded in fighting his way to the chief throne in India, and held his court at Palibothra, on the Ganges. But Sanskrit names translated into Greek baffled all conjecture, until about the year A.D. 1780, when it happily occurred to Sir William Jones that the Sandracottus of the Greeks might be the Chandragupta of the Hindus; and then it was observed that the Greeks often wrote the name Xandra Coptus, and that the Hindus in a similar manner wrote Chandra Gupta, —Chandra being the moon, and Gupta, protected by the family-name of several dynasties which flourished at various eras.

It was a happy day for Indian history when this discovery was made, for one date being fixed there was hope of adjusting the rest; but very much had to be done, for Sanskrit literature had opened upon scholars as a sea without landmarks. The Gods and the Kings floated free upon the waters, unfixed by dates, Vishnu and Siva side by side with Indra and Agni, Buddhism taking precedence of Brahmanism, and Buddha figuring as a Negro, B.C. 2000. But now the drifting history began to find safe anchorage, and gradually Indra and Agni, Brahme and Brahma were ranged in chronological order; whilst Vishnu and Siva were forced to give up their claims to remote antiquity. The Greek invasion and the reign of Chandragupta were as strongholds, either before or after which all names and facts were to take their places; and it was on coins, and in inscriptions, or columns, rocks, temples, and statues, that names and facts were to be sought for.

In A.D. 1787 Sir William Jones founded the Asiatic Society, in Calcutta, and particularly invited attention to

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inscriptions. The Society commenced its publications in quarto volumes, much occupied with questions of priority,—not only the priority of the Gods in the Vedas and Gods in the Puranas, but the priority of Pagodás in the east or of excavations in the west of the Peninsula, and many other questions now long settled. Some errors were proved, and much interesting detached information was recorded; but progress generally was slow, until the year 1828, when the late Mr. James Prinsep plunged into the subject with all the ardour of youth and genius. Professor Wilson was happily at that time still in India, and lent the essential aid of his cautious judgment and profound knowledge of Eastern languages. Thus supported, Mr. Prinsep and his enthusiastic young friends studied and collected coins until they established the fact that coins subsequent to Alexander bore inscriptions which were Hindu, but not Sanskrit. The Oriental scholars, not only of India, but of Paris and Germany, applied themselves in earnest to decipher these legends. In 1834 Dr. Mill succeeded in reading some obsolete characters on a pillar at Allahabad, and this prepared the way for the decipherment of the still older character of the coins.

To collect coins and study inscriptions became the rage; and as it was obvious that history could not be reached in any other way, it was a most justifiable occupation. In all these researches James Prinsep was the leader: he commenced with very little knowledge of Oriental languages, but his generous ardour brought him every required assistance. His was a spirit free from jealousy and vanity: he worked openly himself, and invited and welcomed every contribution from others with a genuine, hearty love for truth and progress.

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A Lat, or pillar, at Delhi, was observed to bear a very long inscription in the most ancient character of the coins, that is, in the *oldest Nagari*. Presently a second inscription on the column at Allahabad was found to be precisely similar; and in October, 1834, Mr. Hodgson sent notice of three more such pillars east of the Ganges,—at Bakra, Mathiah, and Radhiah,—all inscribed in the same unreadable character. Facsimiles were attempted of some of these inscriptions, and copies sent to Europe. Professor Lassen at Bonn, and Jacquet at Paris, entered heartily into communication with James Prinsep at Calcutta, aiding him by their sympathy and their suggestions, sometimes anticipating a step in the process, and sometimes arriving simultaneously at a similar result; but it was only in India, imbued with the spirit of the people and the country, that the discovery could be completed. Those who were in Calcutta between the years 1835 and 1839, will never forget the enthusiasm prevailing in the monthly meetings of the Asiatic Society, of which James Prinsep was the secretary, or in the pages of its Journal, of which he was the editor. No fatigue or trouble was spared in procuring correct facsimiles of inscriptions, or in discovering ancient monuments and sending drawings to "Prinsep for his Journal."

In the Journals for 1835 and 1836 various notices are given of Mr. Prinsep's success in deciphering; and at length, in the Journal for June, 1837, he gives a full account in Malwa of his discovery. Captain E. Smith had sent him facsimiles of short detached sentences, cut irregularly on the pillars or rail surrounding a mound (a Tope or Dagoba) at Sanchi, in Malwa, so correct that "every word can be read, except where the stone is actually cut away."

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Some of these were "apparently trivial fragments of rude handwriting," but it was precisely those short detached sentences which proved most useful; each sentence terminated with the same two letters. Now Mr. Prinsep knew that in the Buddhist temples of Ava it was the custom to place flag-staffs, and images, etc., bearing the donors' names, in the space which surrounds the chief monument, or Dagoba; this gave him the idea that these short inscriptions must be records of gifts. He modestly says therefore that "accident rather than study had the merit of solving the enigma which so long baffled the learned;" but it was an accident which could not have happened to one less well prepared, and which would have been useless unless zealously followed up. In the course of a few minutes he found himself possessed of the whole alphabet, including the letters previously gained from coins, and he now read,—

"The gift of the mother of Dharmagirika."
"The gift of Sobhagaya, the fireman or blacksmith."
"The gift of Kada, the poor man."
"The gift of Sethin's deceased daughter."

Many similar records were read, but these have been selected as most opposed to Brahmanical custom and most characteristic of Buddhism.

It would be pleasant to give further extracts from the Journals of 1836–37, but sufficient has been produced to show the character of the discoveries then made, and the great zeal with which they were pursued. It would be quite out of character with the spirit of James Prinsep anxiously to weigh the exact proportion of his work, and that of others, in these decipherments. Such anxiety would be desecration to the memory of one who simply did *all* he could, and

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welcomed and encouraged from others *all* they could contribute. There was no measure in his love for truth or his love for man, and in consequence his influence was genial, like the warm west wind, at whose coming the buds and flowers hastened to expand. We shall now therefore attend more to the results than to the process of the discoveries made in strange new alphabets.

All the short inscriptions recording gifts, and especially gifts from poor people or women, showed strong evidence of Buddhism as now existing in Ava and Ceylon, and their being Buddhist was confirmed when the longer inscription over the principal gateway at Sanchi was deciphered; it begins thus:—

"To the all-respected Sramanas, . . . who by deep meditation have subdued their passions."

A second inscription on the side of the gate records the name of a lady, who leaves money to devotees who shall offer up prayers for her deceased father and mother, and also money to the poor; and further,—

"In the *ratna griha*" (jewel-house, treasury,) "also are deposited three dinars. With the interest of these three dinars, . . . day by day three lamps are to be lighted . . . at the shrines of the four Buddhas."

This and another inscription on the side of the eastern gate were evidently cut after the gateways were finished; and it was therefore no disappointment to find them comparatively modern, probably about A.D. 400. But the Agathocles coin proved that these newly deciphered characters were used in the third century *before* our era; and Mr. Prinsep was most impatient to apply "the master-key" with which they furnished him, for the unlocking of the

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long inscription on the columns, which was already suspected of teaching the tenets of some reformer in religion. He was now acquainted with five such columns, each bearing an inscription consisting of many parts or paragraphs, and, with slight exceptions, all alike. At Delhi, in addition to those on the sides, there is one which goes round the pillar, and at Allahabad there are five lines more than are to be found elsewhere; the language is nearly the same as that of the short fragments on the rails at Sanchi, and this proved to be not Sanskrit, but a variety or derivation resembling the Pali of the Buddhist books in Ceylon. It also much resembled parts of Sanskrit dramas, where it is spoken by women or the lower classes; whilst well educated Kings, Princes, and Brahmans speak Sanskrit. From this it was conjectured that, at a time when Sanskrit was the language of the learned in Hindustan, Pali was the dialect in common use; and Mr. Prinsep inferred that the inscription was the work of Buddhists, who, "like all sects who have appealed to the common sense of the people against the learning and priestcraft of the schools, made use of the vernacular." But whilst the pillar inscriptions were still under investigation, similar engravings were found upon rocks. These were first observed upon a rock at Girnar, in Guzerat; and whilst Mr. Prinsep was endeavouring to make out a facsimile sent to him in 1837, Lieutenant Kittoe discovered a long series in a similar character on the other side of India, at Dhauli, in Cuttack. "I had just groped my way through the Girnar text and proved it," Mr. Prinsep says, "to be like that of the pillars, a series of edicts, . . . when I took up the Cuttack inscriptions, . . . and to my surprise and joy discovered that the greater part . . . was

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identical with the inscription at Girnar. And thus, as I had five copies of the pillar inscription to collate, chance had now thrown in my way two copies of the rock edicts."

A third rock inscription has since been found, also similar in sense, but differing in alphabet. The two first, those from Guzerat and Cuttack, were deciphered by Mr. Prinsep; but the third was not found until illness had deprived him of the power of further efforts: it is in a very peculiar character, of a Hebrew or Phœnician cast. It is called Arianian, and was first deciphered by Mr. Norris, in 1848, when he felt almost disappointed at its containing nothing more than a third edition of the proclamations of Girnar and Dhauli.

Eight copies of nearly similar proclamations have thus been deciphered, five upon columns and three upon rocks, all alike in language, with a dialect varying a little according to the province. The Punjab inscription, at Kapur di Giri, which is written in a character particularly unlike Sanskrit, has more of the Sanskrit idiom and inflections than any of the others. This may be accounted for on the principle that the English of the Highlanders in Scotland is much freer from local idioms than that of the lowland Scotch; the lowland Scotch, like the people of Cuttack and Guzerat, having a vernacular of their own; whilst the Scotch highlanders and the Punjab highlanders spoke a totally different language, whether Gaelic, Phœnician, or Babylonian, and in either case the Government proclamations would be made in the court-dialect used at the seat of Government. The purport of this proclamation proved to be mainly an exhortation from the King paramount to his people, requiring them to live according to the rules of

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Dharma. We have already made acquaintance with *Dharma* as a legitimate end of existence in the philosophical writings of the Sankhyas; but there are two reasons why these Pali proclamations could not be the work of Brahmans: first, because Brahmans refused to instruct any but men invested with the sacred thread, and therefore learned in Sanskrit; and second, because a Brahmanical King would have left instruction to Brahmans, and was not likely to teach *Dharma* in his own name without even referring to Rishis (saints), or *Sruti* (what has been heard), or *Smriti* (what has been remembered). We will however first inspect the series of Edicts, and reserve further discussion until their contents have fairly occupied our minds.

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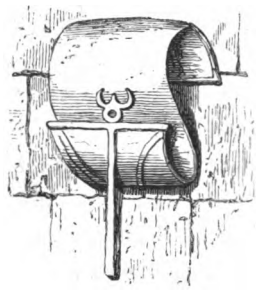

CHAPTER III.

"Day broke; the morning of a mighty year
Came forth and smiled."—BARRY CORNWALL.

JAMES PRINSEP'S first joyful renderings of the inscriptions on the rocks have been revised by Wilson fully, and partially by Lassen, and more lately, Prinsep, Wilson, and Lassen's translations were revised by Burnouf. These learned men had the advantage not only of mutual assistance and of new transcripts, but also of a new original, for the inscription at Kapur di Giri was not deciphered during the lifetime of James Prinsep. Professor Wilson offered his new readings as "subject to correction in every page," and as given not in opposition, but in continuation of the work already effected. Indeed the testimony of so great a scholar to the merits of his young coadjutor is too interesting to be omitted. "With regard," he says, "to the translations which we owe to the learning and ingenuity of the late James Prinsep, we must remember that they were the first attempts to convey a knowledge of the purport of documents in a new character and unknown language; . . . copies had been published for many years, but had baffled

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the most eminent scholars, and remained undeciphered until James Prinsep discovered their real nature and rendered them readable; . . . whatever may be objected to particular passages . . . will not invalidate his claims to our acknowledgment and admiration for what he has accomplished with unequalled labour, incomparable ingenuity, and unrivalled success."* Not less graceful is M. Burnouf's manner of introducing his corrections. "Si je viens à mon tour, après de si savans hommes, proposer mon interprétation, c'est que comme personne ne peut se flatter d'arriver du premier coup à l'intelligence définitive de ces monumens difficiles, il n'y a personne non plus qui ne puisse se flatter d'aider à leur interprétation."

We shall first consider the fourteen Edicts on the rocks, of which Professor Wilson has collated four copies. These Edicts were issued in the twelfth and fourteenth years of the reign of a King who calls himself Piyadasi, the beloved of the Gods; and there are many reasons for believing that the person so designated is the great Buddhist King Asoka, who reigned from B.C. 260 to 220.

TABLET I.

This is the Edict of the beloved of the Gods, the Raja Piyadasi. The putting to death of animals is to be entirely discontinued, and no convivial meeting is to be held, for the beloved of the Gods, Raja Piyadasi, remarks many faults in such assemblies. There is but one assembly indeed which is approved of by the Raja, . . . which is that of the great kitchen of Raja Piyadasi; every day hundreds of thousands of animals have been slaughtered for virtuous purposes, but now although this pious Edict is proclaimed that animals may be killed for good purposes, and such is the practice; yet as the practice is not determined, these presents are proclaimed, that hereafter they shall not be killed.†

* Rock Inscriptions, Feb. 1849, J. R. A. S., xii. p. 251.

† Wilson, J. R. A. S., xii.

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The literal expression is that hundreds of thousands of animals were killed daily to *make soup in the King's kitchen,* but that this was done before the King had become religious. According to the Brahmanical Code of Manu, pious people must avoid flesh-meat, and "feel tender affection for all animated bodies," occasioning "not even the smallest dread to sentient creatures."* And with the same feeling the Sankhya philosophers objected to the Vedic mode of "putting an end to pain" (obtaining absorption after death), because it involved sacrifice or was "attended by the slaughter of animals." The Brahmans had therefore already taught the virtue of respecting animal life, but a Brahmanical King would not have practised this virtue whilst he remained king; instead of proclaiming it as a rule of life for universal acceptation, he would have abdicated his throne, and have performed his fasts and asceticisms in seclusion.

TABLET II.

In all the conquered territories of the Raja Piyadasi, even unto the ends of the earth, as in Chola, in Pida (the kingdom of Satyaputra),† in Keralaputra (or Malabar), and in Tambapanni (or Ceylon), and to Antiochus the Yona Raja, and to those Princes who are allied with him, it is proclaimed that two designs have been cherished by Piyadasi,—one regarding men, and one relating to animals,—that everywhere wholesome vegetables, roots, and fruit-trees shall be cultivated, and that on the roads wells shall be dug and trees planted, to give enjoyment for both men and animals.

The above reading of Tablet II. is taken partly from Wilson and partly from Lassen; it was however Mr. Prinsep who first explored its contents and discovered the name of

* Code of Manu, vi. 14, viii. 40.

† Satyaputra means "Son of Truth." Lassen considers it the Buddhist name of the King of Pida, a place near Arcot.

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Antiochus, which he had hailed with characteristic ardour. Indian antiquities excited but little attention, he observed, so long as they illustrated mere Indian history; "but the moment any name or event turns up, . . . offering a point of connection between the legends of India and the histories of Greece and Rome, . . . a spreading interest is aroused. Such was the engrossing interest which attended the identification of *Sandracottus* with *Chandragupta*, in the days of Sir William Jones; such the ardour with which the Sanskrit was studied, and is still studied, by philologists at home, after it was discovered to bear an intimate relation to the classical languages of Europe. . . . I have now to bring to the notice of the Society another link of the same chain of discovery, which will, if I do not deceive myself, create a still stronger degree of general interest in the labours, and of confidence in the deductions, of our antiquarian members, than any that has preceded it. I feel it so impossible to keep this highly singular discovery to myself, that I risk the imputation of bringing it forward in an immature shape."* This name Antiochus Mr. Prinsep had already observed in four different places, sometimes with and sometimes without the addition of *Yona* or *Yavana* Raja. Professor Lassen supposes this King to have been Antiochus II., who died B.C. 247, twelve years after the inauguration of Asoka.

TABLET III.

King Priyadasi† says:—This was ordained by me when I had

* J. A. S. B., Feb. 1838, p. 156.

† In the last discovered inscriptions at Kapur di Giri, in the Punjab, Professor Wilson observes that this name has "the more correct Sanskrit form of *Priya*, instead of the Pali *Piya*dasi." The spelling is consequently different in the different tablets.

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been twelve years inaugurated in the conquered country; that amongst those united in the law, whether strangers or my own subjects, quinquennial expiation shall be held for the enforcement of moral obligations, as,—duty to parents, friends, children, relations, Brahmans, and Sramans. Liberality is good, non-injury of living creatures is good, abstinence from prodigality and slander is good. The Assembly itself will instruct the faithful in the virtues here enumerated, both by explanation and by example.*

M. Burnouf observes that this last sentence is more literally, "'D'après la cause et d'après la lettre;' à peu près comme quand on dit, *au fond et dans la forme.*"†

TABLET IV.

In past times, during many hundreds of years, there have prevailed destruction of life and the injury of living beings, want of respect for kindred, Brahmans and Sramans. But now King Priyadasi practises the Law, the drum sounds, and the Law is proclaimed by processions of cars and elephants, and displays of fireworks. That which had not been seen for centuries, is now seen, . . . in consequence of King Priyadasi's commands that the Law be practised. . . . And Priyadasi will cause the observance of the Law to increase; and the sons and grandsons and great-grandsons of Priyadasi will cause its observance to increase until the *Kalpa* of destruction.‡

A sentence here occurs which is understood by Burnouf to signify that outward conformity is not sufficient: "Cette observation même de la loi n'existe pas pour celui qui n'a pas de morale." The concluding words state that the present Edict was written in the twelfth year since the inauguration of King Priyadasi.

Burnouf reads the commencement of Tablet V. as "Virtue is difficult of performance," therefore Priyadasi

* Wilson, J. R. A. S., xii.

† Appendix to 'Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi,' x. 738.

‡ In transcribing these Tablets, words and sentences are omitted when they appear unnecessary to the sense.

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and his posterity must adhere to the law. "Vice is easily committed, therefore *Dharma Mahamatra* (or great officers of morals) are appointed by me in the thirteenth year of my inauguration," whose business it will be to preside over the law and cause it to spread amongst people of all the *Pashandas*, and amongst the people of *Kamboja* (eastern Kabulistan), *Gandhara* (Candahar), and *Naristika* (Rashtika or Guzerat), and also to Pitenika, a place unknown. *Pashanda* has been shown by Professor Wilson to mean the pious of various sects. We shall give the remainder of the Tablet in the Professor's words, but he offers it as "subject to very great reservation."*

TABLET V.

They (the Mahamatra) shall also be spread among the warriors, the Brahmans, the mendicants, the destitute, and others, without any obstruction, for the happiness of the well-disposed, in order to loosen the bonds of those who are bound, and liberate those who are confined, through the means of holy wisdom disseminated by pious teachers, and they will proceed to the outer cities and fastnesses of my brother and sister, and wherever are any other of my kindred; and the ministers of morals, those who are appointed as superintendents of morals, shall, wherever the moral law is established, give encouragement to the charitable and those addicted to virtue. With this intent this Edict is written, and let my people obey it.

For Tablet VI. we shall avail ourselves of Lassen's version.†

TABLET VI.

Hitherto attention has not been given to reports and affairs incessantly, or at all times, and on this account I decree that at all times, —even when I take recreation in the apartments of the women and children, or in conversation, or in riding, or in gardens, in all places,— there shall be informers (*Prativadaka*) to make known to me the wishes of the people; and everywhere I will occupy myself with the

* Wilson, J. R. A. S., xii. p. 187. † Lassen, ii. p. 255, *note*.

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welfare of the people; and whatever I declare, or whatever the Mahamatra shall declare, shall be referred to the Council for decision. Thus shall reports be made to me. This have I everywhere and in every place commanded, for to me there is not satisfaction in the pursuit of worldly affairs; the most worthy pursuit is the prosperity of the whole world. My whole endeavour is to be blameless towards all creatures, to make them happy here below, and enable them hereafter to attain *Swarga*. With this view this moral Edict has been written: may it long endure; and may my sons and great-grandsons after me also labour for the universal good; but this is difficult without extreme exertion.

Burnouf gives the last sentence as "Mais cela est difficile à faire si ce n'est par un héroïsme supérieur."*

TABLET VII.

The beloved of the Gods, the Raja Priyadasi, desires that the ascetics of all the different beliefs (the *Pashanda*) may everywhere dwell (unmolested): they all aim at moral restraint and purity of disposition; but men have various opinions and various desires, and the ascetics obtain either all or merely a part (of what they want). However, even for him who does not obtain a large gift or alms, purity of disposition, gratitude, and steady devotion, is desirable.†

This is the general meaning attributed to Tablet VII. by Burnouf, who adopts the interpretation of *Pashanda* from Professor Wilson. Tablet VIII. is given from Wilson.‡

TABLET VIII.

In past times Kings were addicted to travelling about, to companions, to going abroad, to hunting, and similar amusements; but Piyadasi, the beloved of the Gods, having been ten years inaugurated, by him easily awakened, that moral festival is adopted (which consists) in seeing and bestowing gifts on Brahmanas and Sramanas, in seeing and giving gold to Elders, and overseeing the country and the people; the institution of moral laws and the investigation of morals. Such are the devices for the removal of apprehension, and

* Burnouf, Appendix, x. 654. † Appendix, x. 754.
‡ Wilson, J. R. A. S., xii. 202.

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such are the different pursuits of the favourite of the Gods, King Piyadasi.*

In this Edict we may suppose the King to have had in his mind the Brahmanical type of excellence for Kings, as in the Code of Manu:—

"Hunting, gaming, sleeping by day, . . . singing, dancing, useless travel, a King must shun; because he only who 'has the victory over his own organs . . . can keep his people firm to their duty.'"†

TABLET IX.

The beloved of the Gods, the Raja Piyadasi, thus says:—Every man that is, celebrates various occasions of festivity, as,—on the removal of encumbrances, on invitations, on marriages, on the birth of a son, or on setting forth on a journey,—on these and other occasions a man makes various rejoicings. Such festivals are fruitless—are vain; but the festival that bears great fruit is the festival of duty (the *dharma mangala*), such as the respect of the servant to his master; reverence for holy teachers is good; liberality to Brahmans and Sramanas is good. These and other such acts constitute verily the festival of duty, and this is to be cherished as a father by a son, or a dependant by his master; . . . for the establishment of this object virtuous donations are made, for there is no donation equal to the gift of duty; . . . benevolence contracted between friends . . . is mere chaff: . . . by these means let a man seek *Swarga*.‡

TABLET X.

The beloved of the Gods, the Prince Piyadasi, does not esteem glory and fame as of great value; and besides, for a long time it has been my fame and that of my people that the observance of moral duty and the service of the virtuous should be practised, for this is to be done. This is the fame that the beloved of the Gods desires; and inasmuch as the beloved of the Gods excels, (he holds) all such repu-

* Burnouf reads, that Piyadasi, after being ten years inaugurated, "obtint la science complète de la Bôdhi, ou la connaissance de ce qu'enseigne le Buddha." This he understands from a correction of the inscription made by Captain Jacobs; the word is *Bodhitena*, not *Buddhena*.

† Code of Manu, vii. 47, 45, 44.

‡ Wilson, J. R. A. S., xii. See also Burnouf, Appendix, p. 665.

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