

Christian Mirror,

AND GENERAL MISSIONARY REGISTER.

"MANY SHALL RUN TO AND FRO, AND KNOWLEDGE SHALL BE INCREASED."—DANIEL xii. 4.

VOL. II.

MONTREAL, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1842.

No. 8.

GENERAL LITERATURE.

THE VALE OF THE BRAMINS.

From *Krummacher's Parables*, translated by Prof. Agnew.

IN one of the most beautiful countries of India, under a perpetually serene sky, lies a vale begirt with mountains, which, since ancient days, has been the residence of the pious worshippers of the holy Brama.

Hither, over the mountains, there came one day a young Indian prince, and desired to speak with the father and head of the peaceful Bramin race. His wish was granted him. An old man of tall, noble form received the unknown youth. Welcome, young stranger, said he, to our peaceful vale, whether you have come to us intentionally, or have lost your way!

The former, replied the youth; I come designatedly.

The old man interrupted him, and said: The stranger is always welcome to our vale. We practise here the sacred right of hospitality towards every one, without asking who he is or wherefore he comes. For we still hold to the old custom of not inquiring the name and wishes of the stranger until after the third day. If, therefore, there is nothing urgent with thee, that requires our speedy assistance, come as a man and brother into our circle, and enjoy with a glad heart what we can offer you.

The young prince bowed, and followed the aged Bramin into the cooling shade of a lofty palm, where a numerous family circle was assembled.

Men and women, young men and maidens, all of noble figure and kindly nature, came to meet the stranger, and saluted him with as much frankness as if they had known and loved him for a year. Children skipped about him and presented him flowers.

Oh, what an abode of innocence and joy! sighed the young prince.

These dwell together here always, replied the old man. For Brama lives in our hearts, therefore our senses never grow old; and we see him in each of his creations and gifts, therefore joy never fails us; and so also we have no wants which we cannot satisfy. A deeper involuntary sigh heaved the breast of the youth.

You are fatigued by your journey, said the old man, and beckoned. Immediately two young men came forward and brought a foot-tub to wash the feet of the stranger, and two blooming girls offered to him of the choicest fruit of the vale.

The young prince refused to have his feet washed. It is the custom of the sacred law of hospitality, replied the old man, and a refreshment which the strong rightfully and cheerfully extend to the weary. Here no distinction is made between master and servant. We respect, in every wanderer, the human countenance which proclaims him to us as a son of Brama, who is perfect love.

The young prince was silent, but a glowing

red was diffused over his cheeks, and his knees trembled.

He is not well! said the youths who had prepared the bath for his feet; his knees tremble. Nor has he partaken of our fruits, said the girls compassionately.

The old man went up to him and took his quivering hand. My son, said he, the heat of the day has overcome you. I will lead you into our dwelling, that you may enjoy sleep. It will renew your strength, and prepare you for joyfully participating with us in the holy festival, which awaits us to-morrow.

The youth allowed himself to be led into the house by the good old man. Here was a couch spread with herbs of balmy fragrance, and over the herbs was spread a coverlet, glistening white, as newly fallen snow.

Here, said the Bramin, here you may slumber in quietness, for you rest in the arms of the all-loving Brama, who blesses this vale. That shall these tender, delicately fragrant herbs testify to you, on which you will recline. And these snow white coverings are an emblem of innocence!

While the old man was speaking, two boys entered, bringing a bowl full of dark red wine. He took it out of their hands, and said to the princely youth: Behold, we eat only the fruits of the field, and of the trees and vines, as nature presents them to us. But for the sick and weary we also press the grapes. It is the only blood we shed, added he, smiling; but it is done without occasioning any sighs, and indeed, to quiet sighing. Drink, my dear, it will do your heart good.

The young man took the cup with trembling hand, and whilst he drank, an awful shudder came over him.

As he handed back the cup, a soft solemn song sounded in the distance. What is that? inquired the prince. It is the evening hymn, replied the Bramin. The sun is going down. We offer Brama our united thanks for the light of heaven, which he has sent down upon us, and for the day's life which he has granted us. We believe that only the prayer of love and joy can be well pleasing to the most benevolent and most beneficent Being; therefore we offer him our thanks in song, and unitedly. Nor in our prayer shall we be un mindful of you; for are you not now one of our family circle? Brama grant thee quiet sleep and a joyful waking up?

So saying, with friendly spirit, the old man left the prince. But the latter covered up his head, and could not look into the face of the lofty, noble man, nor return his salutation.

The young man was now alone, but no sleep would close his eyes. It was to him as if the blood boiled in his veins; he heard the beating of his heart. The images of the past flitted incessantly before him, and the brighter and clearer it was without, the darker was it in his soul. The clear moonlight night which played through the rustling of the leaves into his chamber, seemed to him as if it would never end. He longed for the break of day. At last he fell into a feverish slumber, often disturbed by fearful dreams. He awoke with

the first gleam of the morning twilight. A lovely responsive hymn, sung by male and female voices, sounded in the distance, more serious and solemn than the evening hymn of the preceding day. It was the united morning hymn of the Bramin family at sunrise.

The young prince was inexpressibly affected by it. He wished to unite his voice in the universal petition, but was not able.

The door of his chamber then opened softly, and the old man looked through the opening. Anxious about the youth, whom he believed to be sick, he could not wait until he arose. He intended, if he were still asleep, softly to close the door and return.

When he found the stranger awake, he kindly saluted him, and inquired of his health. The youth was deeply moved, and exclaimed: Oh, what love meets me in this vale!

My son, said the Bramin, we worship a great Father, and love every one of his creatures, as a creation of his wisdom and goodness, but every man as his child and image, and all as our brethren. From childhood up, accustomed to simplicity of heart and every childlike thought, this has become natural to us, and we wish no thanks that are not due to us. You will now celebrate with us the joyful festival of love.

The old man had scarcely uttered these words when the youth broke out into a flood of tears, and begged the Bramin to accompany him out of the vale, on to the way by which he had come.

The old man was astonished at the singular stranger, and led him in silence to the way that led out of the vale.

The youth then commenced: I leave your vale forever. I thought to find peace in the midst of you, but I have suffered the most awful torments of my life.

I do not understand you, interrupted the Bramin, looking at the stranger with surprise. In our peaceful vale—

Your vale, reverend father, rejoined the youth, is the dwelling-place of peace and innocence.

There falls among us, said the old man, with celestial serenity, no tear but the tear of joy and gratitude; no drop of blood moistens the earth; and no sigh of oppressed innocence profanes Brama's breath. The ground which supports and nourishes us, the atmosphere which surrounds us, is pure and unattained.

But I, cried the young prince, I am an impure, profane! That it is which converts your innocent vale into an abode of miseries to me.

The old man was silent, and a stream of compassion and sympathy flowed out of his great eye upon the unfortunate youth.

They stood on the confines of the vale. The youth again broke the silence, and said: Reverend old man, your gentleness breaks my heart! Oh, if it might also heal it! Yet listen now to my unfortunate history.

Behold, I am the son of king Amandus; I was heir to his throne and the dominion of India. But these hands are stained with innocent blood. The only son of a widow fell