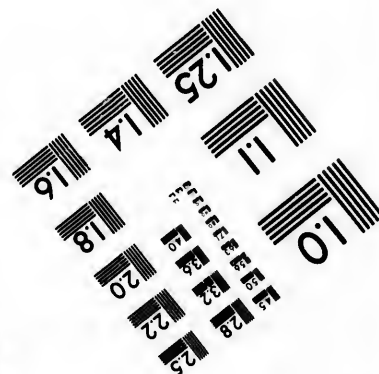
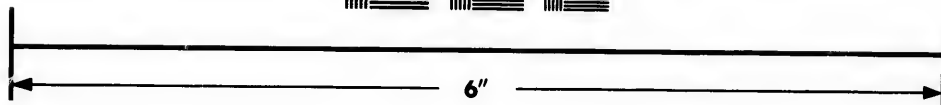
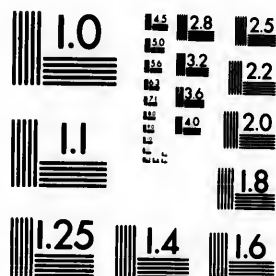


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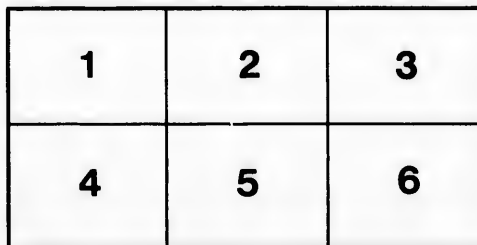
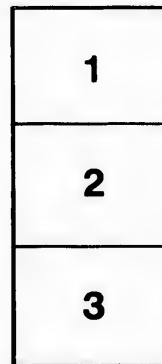
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*Prof Goldwin Smith
with H. J. Pre-
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: The Ancient :
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: of India. :
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3 A Paper read before the Hamilton
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THE
ANCIENT LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
OF INDIA.

India has always been a land of marvels ; and what she has been in this respect she still is, and will likely continue to be. The "fairy tales of science" told concerning India in our own times, equal, indeed surpass, the fabulous stories formerly current respecting that wonderful land. What, for instance, could be stranger than the modern doctrine of a close race relationship between India and Europe. And yet the truth of that strange doctrine has won for it general credence. Exact research, surveys and explorations have aided to a better appreciation of the special characteristics of India and her people, and have strengthened the desire to know, as definitely as possible, their past history and all that can be learned respecting this long unsuspected kinship. How much information of interest has been added to what was formerly known of India may be inferred from a perusal of the Reports, from time to time, through the courtesy of the India Office, received by this Association. The treasures of her fauna and flora are steadily coming to the light through the efforts of men of special fitness for their work ; and the Archæological Survey is gradually digging up from beneath the mould of centuries, vestiges of a civilization nearly obliterated. Who can examine the reports of Gen. Cunningham, and their accompanying photographic illustrations, without desiring to learn more of these old Indians, who it has been said, "built like giants, and decorated their buildings like jewellers."

What an interesting chapter Indian history has become, and what knotty questions respecting the civilization of Europe it has helped to solve. Race after race has from time immemorial crowded on the heels of its predecessors into that peninsula, driving the weaker aborigines to the shelter of the mountains and jungles, as the

invading Saxons drove the native Britons to the hills and fens of England. We can see how in turn, Greek, Arab, Mogul, and Mahratta, made India groan under the conquerors' heel, and how Brahmin and Buddhist, Mohammedan and Christian, Catholic and Protestant, with zeal have striven to guide the faith of her teeming millions. We may also see that the spirit of commerce, which during the last four centuries has been gaining dominance in western Europe, has dealt as aggressively with India as did the spirit of conquest of earlier times. The trading companies of the Portuguese, Dutch, Danes, French, and English all made India a common point of mercantile attack; and France and England, as a sequel to their commercial rivalry, fought out on her soil some of their most sanguinary battles. For several generations past British mercantile influence in India has increased; and political authority has followed so closely on the heels of commercial enterprise that India has become an integral portion of the British Empire, and there are to-day, exclusive of the native states, two hundred millions of souls in India who are our own fellow subjects under the British Crown.

The languages of this immense population fall into two groups—the Aryan and Non-Aryan or Dravidian tongues. The Rev. R. Caldwell, who has compiled a comparative grammar of the Dravidian languages, classifies them into nine idioms, spoken by about thirty-two millions of people. Thus:—

The Tamil	is spoken by	10 millions,
“ Telegu	“ “	14 “
“ Canarese	“ “	5 “
“ Malayalam	“ “	2½ “
“ Telu	“ “	150 thousand,

and the Toda, Kota, Gond and Khond by about half a million of people. Mr. Hunter, the well known writer on Indian subjects, has made the Non-Aryan languages of India a study, and has given much information concerning them; but here I can only refer to his work.

The chief Aryan languages spoken in India are the Hindi, Hindustani, Bengali, Pendschabi, Sindhi, Guzerati and the language of the Mahrattas. Besides these there is however another Aryan language, which, although it is not now and has not been a living language for more than two thousand years, is the most important of the Indian tongues. The language referred to was the mother

tongue of the old Indians of Vedic times—the Sanskrit—and to the consideration of some of its more salient features I ask your attention. It is still studied in India, and remains there, as it has been so far back as history can be traced, the chief language of religion, law and the higher branches of learning. In its relationship to the living Aryan tongues of India it takes a similar position to that Latin holds in relation to the Romance languages of Europe. Towards the Iranic, Celtic, Greek, Italic, Lithuanic, Slavonic and Germanic languages it stands as an elder sister, forming with them the Family of Languages for half a century studied under the comparative method, and generally called the Indo Germanic, Indo European, or, perhaps better than either, the Aryan tongues. German philologists naturally favor the term Indo Germanic, and confine the use of the term Aryan exclusively to the Asiatic—that is the Indian and Iranian—members of the family. How long it is since this was a spoken living language no one pretends to say with exactness; but it is known from Indian rock inscriptions, dating back to about two hundred years before the Christian era, that the golden age of Sanskrit development was long anterior to these rock records, for their language had already fallen as far away from that of the Vedas as the language of modern Italy has from that of Cicero. As much for the humane spirit it breathes as for its antiquity, I give one of the oldest of these inscriptions from the rocks at Girnar. It is an edict by the Buddhist King Asoka, and was translated by Prinsep as follows: “Everywhere within the conquered Province of “Raja Pyadasi, the beloved of the Gods, as well as in the parts “occupied by the faithful, such as Chola, Pida, Styaputra and Ketalaputra, even as far as Tambapaimi (Ceylon), and moreover within “the dominions of Antiochus the Greek (of which Antiochus’ “generals are the rulers), everywhere, the heaven beloved Raja “Pyadasi’s double system of medical aid is established; both medicinal aid for man and medical aid for animals, together with “medicaments of all sorts, which are suitable for man and suitable “for animals; and wherever there is not such provision there are to “be prepared and to be planted both root-drugs and herbs.

“And in all the public highways wells are to be dug, and trees “to be planted for the accommodation of man and animals.”

The word Sanskrit means the cultivated, the ornate. As applied to the language of the old Indians, it means the cultivated

language, in antithesis to the Prakrit or common dialects spoken in everyday use. Sanskrit has forty-seven letters; fourteen vowels and thirty-three consonants. These, with the addition of two special signs, one for nasal sounds and one for the sound taken by S and R at the end of words, called *visarga*, furnish a distinct character for each sound of the language. The alphabet generally used is that called *devanagari*; though other alphabets can be used, as Sanskrit works are often written in the Bengali character, and the Brahmins of southern India used a more cursive alphabet, the Grantha, throughout an extended territory. In Germany, Sanskrit books are sometimes printed after a system of transliteration, ordinary Roman type with certain additional dots and marks being used instead of the *nagari* letters. This is done for cheapness chiefly, but in part that such books may be of service to students of comparative philology, who might grudge the time requisite to learn the Sanskrit alphabet; the reader of Sanskrit texts must needs learn the Sanskrit alphabet. Wilkins and Sir Wm. Jones adopted almost the exact transliteration now used, because they could get no Sanskrit type. So great was their difficulty in this respect that Wilkins had to cut with his own hands the matrices for the first font ever used to print any lengthy Indian manuscript. Sanskrit writing runs from left to right like our own, but there is evidence that at one time it ran the other way like Hebrew, and some scholars think the earliest alphabet of the language was of Semitic origin. Sanskrit words can be readily analyzed, and stripped of their terminations and suffixes, so as to leave apparent the primary roots from which their meaning springs. The total number of Sanskrit roots is less than two thousand, and those in general use are but a comparatively small part of that number, as various shades of meaning may be given to the same root by the use of prepositions and other additions. Indian grammarians have compiled root collections still in use. Such a collection is called a *dhatu pathah*, and is arranged alphabetically according to the terminal letters of each root, and not as we arrange our dictionaries according to the initial letters of words. Westergaard, the Danish philologist, published in 1841 at Bonn such a book of roots. His work is one of profound scholarship, as it also gives all the chief inflections of the Sanskrit verbs, and illustrative passages from standard authors, in which each form he gives is used, and reference to the place in each work from which such

extract is taken. In the middle of Sanskrit words the vowel characters used are simpler and easier to write than those used for the beginning of words; and the short A, though not written at all, has to be sounded after every consonant that has no other vowel following it, or a mark, *virama*, beneath it to show that the A must not follow.

One marked feature of Sanskrit is its strict adherence to the laws of euphony. All hiatus is disallowed, for there are but two or three words in the whole vocabulary where two vowels are suffered to stand together in the body of a word. And when the terminal vowel of one word meets the initial vowel of another, both coalesce into a long vowel or a diphthong, or one of them is transformed into a semi-vowel. The concurrence of consonantal sounds that are harsh is also avoided in various ways minutely pointed out in Sanskrit grammars. These rules for making the language a series of continuous agreeable sounds are called *sandhi* by the native grammarians.

The common practice in Sanskrit of running a number of words together according to the elisions, assimilations and other changes that are laws of the language, led the Brahmins, in order to guard against the introduction of error in this way into their sacred hymns, to adopt two texts; one the *sanhita* or hymnal text, arranged according to the rules referred to, the other, a *pada* or word text, in which each word is given unchanged by the influence connection with another word would subject it to. Max Muller, in his edition of the Rig-Veda, completed in London ten years ago, gives the *sanhita* and *pada* texts in parallel pages. With such care have these sacred songs of the Rishis been handed down from one generation to another that four treatises, called *pratisakhya*s, have been found, whose chief use is to explain to the Brahmin the phonetic changes between the *pada* and *sanhita* versions of his Vedas. Regnier, who is just dead, and M. Muller both edited editions of the Rig-Veda *Pratisakhya*.

The grammatical inflections of Sanskrit nouns and verbs closely correspond to those of the other Aryan languages. Its nouns are richer in declension forms than Latin nouns. They have eight cases, two—the instrumental and locative cases—more than are in Latin; and they are declined in the dual number. The verbs express distinctions of voice, mood, person and tense; and like the

nouns have distinctions of number for the singular, dual and plural. The three personal endings for each number are nearer than those of any other member of the family to the primitive pronominal forms which philology shews were the original person-endings of Indo Germanic verbs.

In his *Bibliotheca Sanskrita*, published at Bonn nearly forty years ago, Prof. Gildermeister gave a list of Sanskrit works, printed and lithographed, which made in the aggregate six hundred and three books. Since that date the interest in Sanskrit has been widely extended. The number of works in that language now known to exist is higher than the number of works in the classic literature of Greece and Rome, and professorships of Sanskrit are established in the leading colleges throughout the world. Of the twenty universities in the German empire, Sanskrit is taught at all but one. Max Muller recently said there are at least ten thousand manuscripts of separate Sanskrit works known to exist. Although the various alien peoples attracted to India from age to age by a spirit of adventure or the love of gain had some knowledge of this ancient literature, Brahmin reticence, and the difficulty of mastering the language in which that literature was locked up, kept the foreigner comparatively in the dark, so that it was reserved for our own times to learn what its extent and sources really are. It is true the Greek invasion brought to light many Indian secrets. And in more recent times the Great Akbar—who, though he could not read or write, took delight in learning and the society of learned men—caused several important Sanskrit works to be translated into Persian. The early Catholic missionaries however, so far as modern Europe is concerned, were the first to rediscover Indian learning. De Nobili in the 17th century, and Fathers Pons and Hanxleden, Jesuit missionaries of a later date, knew of the existence of the Sanskrit language, and made considerable progress in learning it. The life of De Nobili reads like a romance. He learned two or three of the living languages of India as well as Sanskrit, assumed the garb of a Brahmin with the frontal mark and triple cord, and fortifying himself with quotations from their sacred books, he declared that he had come to make known to India a new Veda. The once celebrated book, called the *Esour-Vedam*, which Voltaire introduced to the knowledge of Europe, was attributed to him, but is now believed to have been written by one of his disciples. In Voltaire's work on the "Manners

and Spirit of Nations," it is referred to as a "commentary by Chumontou on the Vedam, which the Brahmins pretend to be the most holy of all books;" and he states that he has placed the MS. in the King's library, where it can be seen by anyone who cares to look at it. In 1790, an Austrian bare footed friar, Panulinus—whose secular name was Wesdin—issued the first Sanskrit grammar of European compilation; and fourteen years later appeared a second and enlarged edition of the same grammar, containing in addition the substance of a native dictionary called the *Amara Kosha*. Only one or two words in this grammar (a copy of which I have the pleasure to submit for the inspection of the Association) are printed in *Divanagari* characters. Roman type is generally used for the Sanskrit words, though a few are printed in the Grantha character. Both works were printed under the auspices of the *Propaganda* at Rome, and were intended for the use of missionaries; they have now little more than an historic value. The good brother was alive to the perplexing intricacies of the grammar he was expounding, for in one place he exclaims, "The admirable craft of the devil! which had led the Brahmin philosophers to form a language at once so rich and complicated, in order to conceal their religious dogmas, not merely from the vulgar, but from men of instruction."

About the same time that Wesdin was enlightening his missionary colleagues by writing Sanskrit grammars for their guidance, a stronger light from another quarter burst in upon the obscurity which enshrouded the old Brahminical learning. So soon as Warren Hastings was made first Governor General of India, he resolved to turn the native laws of the country to as much use as possible in the administration of justice. Halhed, who understood Persian—at the instigation of Hastings, who was anxious to carry his views into practice—undertook the work of codifying the native laws. He had nine Brahmin pundits to assist him, and expected the work would be done in six months; but it took two years, when it was printed under the title of the "Code of the *Gentoo* Laws;" as *gentoo*, meaning heathen, was the common designation by the early Portuguese settlers of the native Indian races. Halhed, in a preface to the work, explained that these laws were not originally written in the Persian language, but that under his supervision they had been translated into Persian from a language called Sanskrit. Notwithstanding the imperfections subsequently discovered in Hal-

hed's Code, it was an epoch making book, as it not only dealt with important questions of Indian jurisprudence from a standpoint entirely new, but also excited a strong desire to learn more about the singular bygone civilization from which these laws had sprung. Moreover, Halhed was the forerunner who cleared the way for a band of illustrious successors, whose "Asiatic Researches" won the admiration of Europe. Foremost in that group of remarkable men stand Wilkins, Sir Wm. Jones and Colebrooke; men whose work will for ever shed lustre on English scholarship. Wilkins was first in the field. He went to India in 1770, and studied Sanskrit under the guidance of an Indian pundit in 1778, four years before Colebrooke's appointment in the Civil Service, and five years before Sir Wm. Jones was made Chief Justice of Calcutta. Immediately on his arrival in India Sir William, with Wilkins, established a literary society and journal at Calcutta, for the advancement of the knowledge of this old learning. In 1785, Wilkins published his translation of the *Bhagavadgita*, an episode from one of the two great epic poems of India. It was the first translation into English of a Sanskrit work, and Warren Hastings wrote the preface. Sir William found himself in a most congenial field of labor, and after a year or two in India he wrote Sir John Macpherson, "I jabber Sanskrit every day with the pundits, and hope before I leave India to understand it as well as "I understand Latin." With the aid of a Persian paraphrase he was soon busily engaged in the translation of the "Laws of Manu;" and translations of the fable book called the *Hitopadesa*, and *Sakuntala*, or the Fatal Ring, a drama by Kalidasa, a poet of the classic Sanskrit period, followed later on. This is the drama Goethe so highly prized, and of which he wrote:—

"Willst Du die Blüthe des frühen, die Früchte des späteren Jahres,

"Willst Du was reizt und entzückt, willst Du was sättigt und nährt,

"Willst Du den Himmel, die Erde mit einem Namen begreifen,

"Nenn ich Sacontala, Dich, und so ist alles gesagt."

The Calcutta Literary Society, established by Sir Wm. Jones and his colleagues, earned a widely spread reputation, and their journal, the famous Asiatic Researches, became a focus for converging light from all quarters on matters pertaining to Indian learning, and for dispersing it again throughout Europe. Colebrooke, on his first arrival in India, paid but little attention to Sanskrit. Drinking and gaming were at that time rampant vices of the Company's servants,

and he but narrowly escaped the vortex of fashionable dissipation. In a letter to his father he says, "Wilkins is Sanskrit mad and has "more Hindu learning than any foreigner possessed since Pythagoras." Fortunately the better qualities of Colebrooke's splendid intellect soon asserted their supremacy over fashion. From boyhood he had taken a keen interest in mathematics and astronomy, and the desire at length became irresistible to learn what these ancient Indian writings had to tell about his favorite subjects. In an amusing manner he says that in the first period of his Indian studies he used to break away from the gaming table to revel in the delights of Sanskrit grammar. Twice however he became disheartened, and threw his studies aside, but only to resume them with increased ardour; and the success he in the end achieved has immortalized his name. Fifty years after the publication of Colebrooke's Sanskrit grammar, Max Muller writes in the preface of his grammar, "I can "hardly hope to rival Colebrooke's accuracy." To this faultless, almost microscopic, exactness in working out the details of the language was joined the master's skill for sketching boldly and in true perspective every subject of the literature that he touched, so that philologists give him the first place in the famous band of orientalist who were his contemporaries. Another feature in Colebrooke's character, which will cause his name to be held in grateful remembrance, was his zeal for the collection and preservation of Indian manuscripts. Some time before his death he presented his collections to the East India Company, that Sanskrit scholars might have readier access to them than was possible to get in his own private library. They number all told fifteen hundred and twenty-six volumes, and fifty-two bundles of MSS. of a miscellaneous character. Eminent scholars regard these manuscripts as the largest and most valuable collection of Sanskrit works ever made.

The seed sown by these men three generations ago has been well watered and husbanded since by many hands, and has brought forth fruit a hundred fold. By whom the good work has been carried on would be too long a story told in detail, and it suffices to say that Colebrooke and his co-workers have had worthy successors not only in England but in every country in Europe; and that America will in due time also do her share of this work, the names of Whitney and Lanman give abundant promise. In India itself, and in all civilized countries, learned societies have supplemented

and aided individual effort in extending the knowledge of Sanskrit literature. The Court of Directors of the old time East India Company in this respect nobly did their duty ; and since the authority of the Crown replaced that of the Company, the interests of Sanskrit learning have not been forgotten. Russia, from a regard for philological learning, which has long been a national trait of her people, and perhaps in part from fear that she was falling behind England in an intelligent appreciation of Indian modes of thought, turned patron to German scholarship in the production of an elaborate dictionary, which is deemed one of the most important Sanskrit publications of this generation. In the production of this great work, for once at least, Slav and Teuton found a common standpoint for co-operation ; and the famous *Wörterbuch*, published by the Imperial Academy of St. Petersburg, embodying, as it does, the labours of Otto Bohtlingh and Rudolph Roth for a quarter of a century, will be a lasting monument of Russian enterprise and German learning.

It would be instructive to methodically trace the results gained by the talent, time and means expended in penetrating the secrets of this old language and the immense literature of which it is the vehicle. But such a task would be by no means easy, and falls beyond my opportunities for research. Purified of its dross, the pure gold of that literature reflects for our instruction the religious and intellectual life, and to some extent the social history also, of the oldest member of the ethnological family to which we ourselves belong. And what a diversity of views, wide as the poles asunder, are recorded in its manuscripts. There may be found the simple hymns of the Rishis of Vedic times ; the elaborate ritual of the Brahminical hierarchy into which that earlier patriarchal life developed ; the growth and—in India—decay of Buddhism ; and the offshoots from the parent stock of the numerous sects and schools of Indian thought, whose tenets touch the most prosaic materialism on the one hand, and the most imaginative pantheism and spiritual monotheism on the other. Thanks to the untiring industry of an energetic if small number of scholars and gentlemen who hold oriental scholarship in esteem, the utterances of many of these old Indian writers are now fairly accessible to English readers. In the translations by Horace Hayman Wilson, John Muir, Griffith, Arnold, and Max Muller, and in those of the "Sacred Books of the East,"

and of Trubner's "Oriental Series," may be found some of the rarest productions of the eastern mind.

Most of the literature of India comes to us directly from the Brahmins, or from the great religious sect that sprang from Brahmanism, the Buddhists. The religion it reveals is indeed crude and replete with absurd myths and superstition, but possesses nevertheless an interest peculiar to itself. Its oldest hymns and ceremonial observances give us a glimpse of that phase of the early history of the Aryan race, when their religious consciousness was awakening them to the perception of forces superior to themselves—forces controlling the universe.

Here, it is impossible to do more than cast a passing glance at the leading features of the chief groups into which the Hindu sacred literature is classified.

First are the Vedas. To these I shall refer again.

Second, the Upanishads, which contain a body of theological and philosophical doctrine to supplement the Vedic hymns and ceremonies. The word means literally sitting down by a teacher, and as applied to these treatises it means doctrines learned at a teacher's feet. For years it was supposed there were only 63 Upanishads, but the late Prof. Haug, of Munich, collected one hundred and one, and believed that many more are in existence. Several of these works are translated in the "Sacred Books of the East." The first volume of that series contains five. The Upanishads are altogether more modern in thought than the Vedas. Their chief doctrine is the necessity of the union of the *Atman*—the individual soul or self—with the higher universal self or soul. Rammohun Roy, some years since, thought to make them the basis of a new religious sect; and a celebrated German mystic of our own times, calls them the "products of the highest wisdom," adding, "they have been the solace of my life and will be the solace of my death." The Vedas and Upanishads are the specially sacred books of the Hindus, the books that can be called canonical. But there are several other classes of works, which, although serving only as aids to explain and illustrate those above mentioned, also partake somewhat of a sacred character. Foremost amongst these are:—

Third, the Vedangas—"limbs of the Veda"—which are divided into six branches. Each branch does not so much represent a par-

particular work, as it does the special kind of knowledge requisite to learn and understand the Vedas and rightly conduct the Vedic ceremonies. These branches of knowledge are called *Siksha*, pronunciation; *Chhandas*, metre; *Vyakarana*, grammar; *Nirukta*, etymology; *Jyotisha*, astronomy; and *Kalpa*, ritual. These names are arranged in the style of the metrical version of the old Eton grammar as follows:—*Siksha, Kalpo, Vyakaranam, Niruktam, Chhando, Jyotisham*. The rules for expounding these subjects are expressed in a very condensed manner, and are called *Sutras*; literally *sutra* means a thread, and these rules are the clews to the knowledge taught. Grammar is of more interest to Europeans than are the rest of these subjects, and is also a branch of learning in which the Hindus excel. I have here a list of Hindu grammars which includes about a hundred native works. It was printed by Colebrooke and includes no doubtful book. Foremost in this list stands the grammar of Panini. His 3996 rules, or *sutras*, are illustrated and explained at great length by commentators, and they are said to answer all questions that can arise respecting the language. Modern philologists have not been slow to acknowledge their indebtedness to Indian grammar. Muller calls it “a wonderful machine, which to “my mind surpasses everything that human ingenuity has devised “for analysing the conglomerate of any language.” In the phonetic division of grammar, our most advanced grammarians are but just beginning to approach the accuracy of those of India, who lived centuries before the Christian era. The laws of metre belong to this division of knowledge. That they were studied with care was pointed out by Colebrooke in his essays; and also more recently by Prof. Weber, who edited with a translation and notes an important *Sutra* on the subject of metre.

It is to the Vedas, however, that the Brahmins continually refer as the sacred well-spring of their learning, and to those, for half a century, some of the best scholars of Europe have directed their attention. The word *Veda* in its general acceptation signifies knowledge. In a special sense it means the sacred knowledge of the Hindus, and more particularly that of their ancient hymns and ceremonies. There are four Vedas, each containing its own arrangement of hymns and ritual; but the fourth, the *Arthava-Veda*, is of later date and inferior to the others. The *Rig-Veda* contains the

most ancient Hindu hymns, arranged according to their reputed authors and the divinities to whom they are addressed. The Sama-Veda is a liturgical collection of single verses to be chanted during the performance of certain ceremonies; and most of these verses are taken from the Rig-Veda. The Vajur-Veda is also liturgical, and is partly in verse and partly in prose. The poetical parts of this Veda are also mainly extracted from the Rig-Veda. A small part of the Arthava-Veda is in prose, and about a sixth part of its hymns is taken from the Rig-Veda, chiefly from the tenth book. It is full of magical incantations; and the reverential awe, inspired by natural phenomena, so characteristic of the Rig-Veda, is in it replaced by a grovelling superstition.

The Rig-Veda is in many respects the most important of the four Vedas. It contains 1028 hymns of 10,580 verses, numbering all told 153,826 words. There is an index or *anukramani* by Saunika, who is said to have lived 400 years B.C., which gives the first words of each hymn of the Rig-Veda, the names of the deities addressed, the name and family of each of the Vedic poets, and the metres of every verse. Even the syllables of the whole of the Rig-Veda are numbered, and in this index they are said to amount to 432,000. How old this collection of hymns is, it is impossible to say with exactness. Common consent has suffered it to be put in "the first place of the long row of books which contain the records of the Aryan branch of mankind." The hymns of the Rig-Veda are evidently not all of the same age; and, in the absence of direct dates, a few facts of Indian history, and the internal evidence found in the hymns themselves, are the sole testimony from which an opinion can be deduced as to how old any of the hymns of this Veda are. Some of the acutest intellects of this and of the last generation have carefully weighed every particle of evidence bearing on this question; and although, as might be supposed, the best scholars engaged in this work differ in their conclusions as to the exact age of these hymns, they yet fairly agree that the oldest are not later than 1500 before Christ.

We must not infer, because Sanskrit scholars believe these hymns to be the intellectual products of the Aryan race at a period 1500 years before Christ, that the existence of Vedic manuscripts of that age is believed in. On the contrary, we are told there are grave

doubts whether Sanskrit had a written literature at all much before the time of Buddha, that is, about 600 years before Christ. The oldest Sanskrit writing known to European scholars is on palm leaves in Japanese Buddhist monasteries. They were brought by Buddhist missionaries from China to Japan, and are said to be more than 1000 years old. Young Buddhist priests of one of the more liberal sects, who were studying Sanskrit at Oxford, induced their friends in Japan to search the monasteries there for Sanskrit texts, when these palm leaves and several old manuscripts were found, and copies sent to Oxford. I have here one of these texts, printed under the care of Max Muller and his Japanese friends three years ago. It is said there is no manuscript of the Vedas in existence older than the fifteenth century of our era. These facts, however, it is contended, in no way militate against the antiquity of these hymns, as the Brahmins, like the Druids, orally imparted to their pupils the knowledge of their sacred mysteries. In fact that method obtains to the present day, and there are said to be thousands of Brahmins in India who know the Vedas by heart, and who from memory could detect the slightest error, even of accent, in a Vedic manuscript. The young student of the Rig-Veda has to spend eight years in the house of his Guru or teacher, and must during that time learn by heart not only the Vedic hymns but nine other books, making altogether 30,000 lines. For a knowledge of the Vedas it is to Colebrooke again, indebtedness has to be acknowledged; for his papers, published in 1805, "on the Vedas," gave the first modern account of these remarkable writings, of any value. How boldly and with what fidelity that first sketch was drawn, may be seen in the republished edition of Colebrooke's works, edited by Prof. Cowell eleven years ago. For that edition Prof. Whitney, who ranks first amongst English speaking Vedic scholars, supplied the essays "on the Vedas," with notes to keep them abreast of modern scholarship; and there is scarcely a note added but is a tribute to Colebrooke's genius. It was from Colebrooke's manuscripts also that Rosen, in 1830, printed his *Rig-Vedic Specimen*. Rosen was a student under Bopp, and for a few years of his short life he was professor of oriental literature at the London University. In 1838, the whole of the first Book of the Rig-Veda, in both the sanhita and pada texts, was published, with a Latin translation by Rosen, whose death at the

early age of thirty-two had occurred the year before. Rosen's books were the pioneers of the printed Veda; and to him will remain the credit of first diffusing, through the medium of the printing press, the text of these interesting hymns, which prior to his undertaking had been stored away in the memory of the Brahmins, or lay stealthily concealed in a few dusty manuscripts. Aufrecht, in 1863, completed for Weber's *Indische Studien* an edition of the whole of the Rig-Veda in transliteration. Max Muller devoted a good part of twenty-five years of the best of his life to bringing out, under the patronage of the East India Co. and the Secretary of State for India, his great edition of the Rig-Veda in devanagari characters, and in both sanhita and pada texts. The first edition, which was completed ten years ago, had also the celebrated native commentary of Sayana, a writer of the 14th century, A.D., and a second edition, with the texts only, has since been printed from the *editio princeps*. Even in India the desire to possess the Veda has been strong enough to overcome the prejudices of the Brahmins, and one or two editions of the Rig-Veda, with translations into some of the living languages of India, have been printed. In 1869, Muller published an English translation of the hymns to the Maruts, or Storm Gods, from the Rig-Veda; and Prof. Wilson, in 1850, commenced a translation which in fifteen years comprised all the hymns. A French translation by Langlois was commenced as early as 1848. It has reached a second edition, notwithstanding the severe criticism to which it has been subjected. Two German translations, one by Ludwig and one by Grassman, of all the hymns of the Rig-Veda have also been published within a few years. Grassman in his translation closely follows the rhythm of the original, and his work is highly esteemed, as his dictionary of the Rig-Veda, published in 1873, four years before his translation of the hymns, had already placed him in the front rank of Vedic scholars.

While the limits of this paper preclude all analysis of the Vedic hymns, and any reference to the epic and dramatic Indian poetry of a later date, I may say that any of the versions of the Rig-Veda referred to, will be found to abound in information respecting the early Aryan race. A rude cultivation of the soil, cattle raising and fighting, were the occupations chiefly followed in these early times, and grain and herds were consequently the chief wealth. There are

in these hymns frequent references to the great Indian rivers, and to the sea, and to merchants who brave its perils for the sake of gain. Wedding and funeral rites are both described in an interesting manner, and incidentally much may be gathered with regard to the social customs of these early days. Gambling, especially with dice, was a favorite pastime. Nowhere are the praises of water more sweetly sung than in these hymns, though truth compels us to say that the intoxicating juice of the Soma or moon plant is also extolled in strains unsurpassed for fervor by the Bacchanalian poets of any age or country. A large number of the hymns of the Rig-Veda are devoted to the praises of Agni, fire; Indra, the mighty god of the firmament; and the Maruts or Storm Gods that are Indra's attendants. Others are in praise of Surya or Savitra—the sun, and to the sons of the boundless, the infinite, called Adityas, which Wilson thinks are manifestations of the sun in the different months of the year. One of these, Varuna, has many hymns in his favour, and so has Mitra, whose name is generally joined to that of some other deity. One poet affirms the existence of thirty-three gods, who rule over earth, air and water, eleven to each region; and in another hymn the poet in his ecstasy exclaims that the number is three thousand, three hundred and thirty-nine. Through this polytheistic darkness there are however gleams of light as of one superior being, the *Aditi*, the infinite, ruling over all; and a high native authority asserts “that all the gods of the Rig-Veda are but parts of one *atman* or soul, subservient to the diversification of his praises, through the immensity and variety of his attributes.” The prayers and offerings to the Vedic gods are chiefly for temporal blessings. They are of the earth earthy. The burden of the suppliant's prayer is in most cases the same; that his crops and herds and children may prosper, and that all impending evils threatening him may be averted, and turned against his enemies to their destruction. In one or two places the poet makes a confession of wrong doing, and asks forgiveness. Some of the hymns are monotonous, and but for their antiquity would have little interest; but most of them are instructive, and not a few are full of poetic conceptions of the highest merit. The following hymn to *Ushas*, the Dawn, for both sentiment and poetic imagery, is a fair specimen of the best and oldest type of the hymns of the Rig-Veda.

TO THE DAWN. RIG-VEDA, VII, 77.

Bright as a bride, shines forth the virgin day-break,
Arousing all that lives to daily action.
Only freed by man's toil can Agni * flame forth,
The dawn brings light by striking down the darkness.

Upwards she rose, and spread, still nearer coming,
With glistening garments clad, she grew in brightness,
Of golden splendor, and of face most comely,
Parent of morning kine, † leader of day-light.

Oh! happy she, blest dawn, the God's eye, bringing
Whitest of steeds, and proudest, sleekest, leading.
In radiance draped, the ruddy morn is coming,
In treasures rich, she tracks the path for mortals.

With blessings nearing, drive hence the unfriendly.
Call forth for us the wide, protected pastures.
Hold back our foemen, blessings bring unto us,
Grant thy adorer added gifts, thou rich one.

Stream down on us thy best, thy brightest radiance.
Oh! Goddess Ushas vouchsafe us long lifetime,
And give us food, thou, who hast every blessing,
Let us abound in cattle, horses, chariots.

Oh! heaven's daughter, thou whom the Vasishthas †
With songs do praise, thou dawn, thou high-born fair one,
Give wealth to us, exalted, wide spread riches,
And all ye Gods, with all your grace, aye shield us.

In almost every hymn of that rude Vedic age, the magic influence of poetry to soften and subdue the harsh and carking cares of life is apparent; and thus from that remote past comes an additional illustration of the truth of Bornes' words: "Poetry benignantly vouchsafes to mortals what nature withholds; a golden age which does not deteriorate, a spring time that does not fade, cloudless happiness, and everlasting youth."

* Fire.

† The morning clouds.

† Name of a celebrated family, the chief of which is the reputed author of the hymns of the VII mandala of the Rig-Veda.

